C77

P. 101.
,84.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2025

https://archive.org/details/bwb_S0-DRU-212

By George Willis Cooke.

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RALPH WALDO EMERSON. 500 numbered copies. With Photogravure Portrait. Large crown 8vo, $5.00, *net*, postpaid. [In Preparation.]

A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL. 500 numbered copies. With Photogravure Portrait. Large crown 8vo, $5.00, *net*, postpaid.

THE POETS OF TRANSCENDENTALISM: An Anthology. Large crown 8vo, $2.00, *net*. Postage 15 cents.

GUIDE BOOK TO THE POETIC AND DRAMATIC WORKS OF ROBERT BROWNING. Crown 8vo, $2.00.

GEORGE ELIOT: A Critical Study of her Life, Writings, and Philosophy. With a Portrait. 12mo, $2.00.

RALPH WALDO EMERSON. His Life, Writings, and Philosophy. With a Portrait. 12mo, $2.00.

POETS AND PROBLEMS. (Tennyson, Ruskin, Browning.) 12mo, $2.00.

HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN & COMPANY,
BOSTON AND NEW YORK.

POETS AND PROBLEMS.

POETS AND PROBLEMS

BY

GEORGE WILLIS COOKE

AUTHOR OF "RALPH WALDO EMERSON: HIS LIFE, WRITINGS, AND PHILOSOPHY" AND "GEORGE ELIOT: A CRITICAL STUDY OF HER LIFE, WRITINGS, AND PHILOSOPHY"

STATE LIBRARY
SALEM, OREGON

BOSTON AND NEW YORK
HOUGHTON, MIFFLIN AND COMPANY
The Riverside Press, Cambridge

Pierce Library
Eastern Oregon University
1410 L.O.U. Avenue
La Grande, OR 97850
WITHDRAWN
From

Copyright, 1886,

By George Willis Cooke.

All Rights Reserved.

CONTENTS.

PART		PAGE
I.	THE POET AS A TEACHER	17
II.	TENNYSON	55
	Introduction. Characteristics of the Victorian Poetry	57
	I. Biographical Sketch of Tennyson	71
	II. Tennyson's Poetic Style	88
	III. Subjective Qualities of Tennyson's Poetry	98
	IV. "Maud"	106
	V. "In Memoriam"	112
	VI. "Idyls of the King"	121
	VII. Tennyson as a Lyrical and Idyllic Poet	127
	VIII. Tennyson as a Dramatic Poet	138
	IX. Tennyson as a Moralist	144
	X. Tennyson's Religious Teachings	153
	Conclusion	168

III. RUSKIN 171

Introduction. The Art-Revival in England 173

I. Biographical Sketch of Ruskin . . 185

II. Ruskin's Prose Style 196

III. Ruskin's Interpretation of Nature . 201

IV. Ruskin as a Literary Critic 208

V. Ruskin as an Art Critic 226

VI. Ruskin as a Political Economist . . 243

VII. Ruskin as a Religious Teacher . . . 257

Conclusion 266

IV. BROWNING 269

Introduction. Idealism in Recent English Literature 271

I. Biographical Sketch of Browning . 279

II. Browning's Relations to his Wife . 289

III. Browning's Theory of Art 303

IV. Characteristics of Browning's Poetry, 316

V. Browning's Dramatic Poetry 329

VI. Browning as a Thinker 345

VII. Browning's Religious Teachings . . 355

Conclusion 385

PREFACE.

I HAVE not sought to play the critic in the following pages. I have not the skill or the inclination for such a task; and I cannot feel it would be worth the while, if I had. For the power of the creative artist in prose or poetry I have a reverence which would forbid my sitting in judgment on his work. By his own capacities and his own methods he must stand or fall. If he is faithful to them, the critic can ask of him nothing more. His methods may be judged; but, in so far as the poet is true to his own personal genius, he should have only our love and admiration.

I do not write as a professional critic, for I have little other than feelings of contempt for that profession and the methods by which it

contrives to live. It is easy to find faults in the best of authors, and to pick flaws in the works of the masters of literature. But of wholesome and pure-hearted admiration the world never has too much; and, sad to say, in literature enthusiasm is seen too seldom. For my part, I enjoy praising, and the giving to him who is worthy my enthusiastic admiration. That I thus unfit myself for the critic's task I am well aware; but I will forego the critic for the sake of the delightful luxury of praising.

I have written of Tennyson, Ruskin, and Browning for no other reason than that I have greatly enjoyed reading their books. I have found them true companions and guides, and the best of friends. I have written of them in a sympathetic spirit, and with a desire to find that in them which is most worthy and most characteristic of their genius. In each I have found some pregnant truth and some luminous interpretation of life. By the highest expression and capacity of each I have sought to recognize him, and to give him the just meed of reverence. In loving any one of them I have not found my

admiration for the others to grow less, for each gives me something I do not find elsewhere. I enjoy the pages of Browning at the same time that I enjoy those of Tennyson; but not from the same causes. I can turn from the one to the other without disappointment or regret, because seeking to meet them on their own ground, and to give them the sympathetic appreciation they demand. I am of the opinion that this is the first and highest quality in the critic; and if he does not possess it he is wholly unworthy the name. Nothing else can take the place of it or make anybody capable of rightly judging the work of a great author. To impregnate one's mind with the poet's thought and emotion, and to surround one's self with his atmosphere, is absolutely necessary to any right conception or appreciation of his work. If that is not done, all talk about him is wasted words and the announcement of superficial faults.

The critic is too often the man of a cold and analytic mind, incapable of sympathy and enthusiasm. He holds his author at arm's length, and scrutinizes him as he would a fossil. The result

is about as appreciative and profitable; and it is a mere waste of effort. If I have failed because of not adopting this method, I am content to have it so; for I would not succeed, through being unable to love the authors of whom I write. Enthusiasm for one's subject is necessary to all good writing; and he who is enamored of any subject soon finds others to appreciate it with him.

My purpose in the first of the following essays has been to point out the true nature of the poet's art. There is a growing tendency at the present time to adopt a merely external and superficial interpretation of poetry, and to see in it nothing more than a jingling together of words. Against that conception of it, which is working the most evil results with our younger poets, I have wished to enter my protest. I do not suppose that any word of mine will be heard far; but I may help a few readers to find what is best in the poetry of the present time. He who is not a poet himself must be content to accept that which comes from others. If it is a true expression of genius, he has no cause to complain should it not answer to his own theories. When

certain current tendencies mislead younger men, however, he cannot feel quite at ease; for he would see every man in whom there is promise doing the best of which he is capable. That which cripples and betrays the poet is a cause for serious alarm and for indignant protest.

I am not foolish enough to suppose that I can stem the drift of opinion on this or any other subject. One might as well try to sweep back the ocean with a broom as to try to resist the stronger tendencies of thought in any age. They must run their course, and make prominent the truths they represent; and then give way to the fresher currents of the newer time; but there may be a singer here or there who has not found himself in sympathy with the drift of the time, and who may be led into harmony with those deeper and wiser tendencies which have in them life and power.

Having described the true compass and quality of the poetic art, I turn for illustration to three of the greatest living writers. The remarkable contrast in the genius and the methods of Tennyson and Browning make them admirably adapted to

my purpose. Not the less does the wonderful prose of Ruskin illustrate its capacity for becoming in every way essentially poetic. Not wishing to appear merely as the champion of a literary theory, I have sought to interpret these authors from a much broader point of view, as well as from this special one, and to indicate their relations to the problems of the time. This, I take it, is a true and a legitimate work for the hand of the critic, and one of very great importance. My purpose has been, in this direction, to interpret the thought and spirit of the Victorian era in England, as they appear in the writings of these representative authors. The literature of any period is but a reflection of its life; and when we would fully understand any age we must turn to the men who have uttered its highest aspiration and given direction to its sentiments.

My essays will everywhere betray my incapacity for finding the faults of the authors of whom I have written. If any of my readers should persist in regarding me as a critic, I am afraid he will turn from my pages with disap-

pointment and disgust. I prefer being told that I have no opinions of my own to tearing to pieces the work of other men. The critics have too long acted as the vultures of literature, rending and devouring, and seeking only to satisfy their hunger by the task of their pens. A better criticism has arisen in these later years, the spirit of which is constructive and inspiring. For the critic of a broad and generous insight there is ever a need, and he can do the literature of any time a great service.

At present the greatest need of American literature is for a true criticism. We have nothing that is worthy of the name, though here and there are men whose work is of the best. We have turned away in disgust from the critic as a faultfinder, but we have not yet learned to cultivate the more philosophical and comprehensive spirit which may animate his work. A criticism of this higher kind would do much to elevate and develop the literature of the Republic. I have written in sympathy with such a criticism, even if I have not attempted to give it fitting expression. My effort has been less

ambitious, and can claim no attention except as the work of an amateur. As a lover of books have I written, and as one who finds his highest intellectual enjoyment in the company of the great masters of literature. I do not know that my book has any other merit than that which comes of this love.

DEDHAM, MASS.

I.

THE POET AS A TEACHER.

ALL good poets, epic, as well as lyric, compose their beautiful poems, not as works of art, but because they are inspired or possessed. — *Plato.*

A MUSICAL thought is one spoken by a mind that has penetrated into the inmost heart of the thing; detected the inmost mystery of it, named the melody that lies hidden in it, the inward harmony of coherence which is its soul, whereby it exists and has a right to be here in the world. — *Carlyle.*

> WHEREWITH bestirs he human spirits?
> Wherewith makes he the elements obey?
> Is't not the stream of song that out his bosom springs,
> And to his heart the world back circling brings?
>
> — *Goethe.*

POETRY interprets in two ways: it interprets by expressing with magical felicity the physiognomy and movement of the outward world, and it interprets by expressing, with inspired conviction, the ideas and laws of the inward world of man's moral and spiritual nature. In other words, poetry is interpretative by having natural magic in it, and by having moral profundity. In both ways it illuminates man; it gives him a satisfying sense of reality; it reconciles him with himself and the Universe. The greatest poets unite in themselves the faculty of both kinds of interpretation, the naturalistic and the moral. But it is observable that in the poets who unite both kinds, the latter (the moral) usually ends by making itself the master. — *Matthew Arnold.*

HE is the healthy, the wise, the fundamental, the manly man, seer of the secret; against all appearances he sees and reports the truth. — *Emerson.*

I.

THE POET AS A TEACHER.

GREATEST of the forms of art, poetry retains its influence over the mind and heart of man through all changes of philosophy and religion. He is ever ready to confess its magic charm and to own its subtle power. Whether savage, sage, or saint, it commands his aspirations and bears sway over his feelings. Its rhyme and rhythm, its music and flow of words, draw him to its beauties as an art; but its sentiment and ideal thought lay hold of him with the keenest joy and the deepest satisfaction.

In every man is something of "the vision and the faculty divine." All men see beneath the surface of things, are transformed by feeling, have the sense of beauty, and are awakened to a higher life by visions of what has not yet been made actual in conduct. Few have the gift of expres-

sion, or the touch and renewing power of the artist; but all have their moments of ideal desire and poetic impulse. To a few are given the faculty of poetic utterance, and the power of making words beautiful with passion and imagination. These say what others only feel; and they become the interpreters of the world's inward impulses and ideals.

The poet is loved of mankind because he reveals the thoughts of many hearts, because he says in words of living force and beauty what all experience. He is the world's sayer and singer, finding forms of adequate utterance for the passion that burns within the heart of man, and singing the heart's emotions in words of melody and power. While feeling is awakened in man by the experiences of life and death, the passionate ardors of love and the dark destinies of hate, poetry will continue to attract men and to answer to a need of their natures. While men love they will delight in the poet's art. As the world advances it may bring us a Homer never again, with his naïve and primitive look at the fortunes and destinies of men; but feeling itself has known no decay or corruption since Homer sang, and it burns within men with the same mighty passion

as in the time of Helen. It has grown purer, sweeter, and nobler with the lapse of ages, less sanguine and volcanic, more humane and gentle; but not less ardent and imperative. While love remains, while death awaits, while pain and sorrow beset, while aspiration soars, feeling will be to the poet an inspiration and a perennial cause of song. It will fill and satisfy his heart; it will cause imagination to bring forth ever fresh creations from the boundless treasure of its spirit; it will smite him with a passion for moral insight and greatness, and it will unite him in the bonds of deathless love to the men his brothers for whom he sings.

The poet does not speak what he will, but what he must; he is the voice of immeasurable powers which lie behind him calling for utterance. He becomes the medium of their expression, the spokesman who comes forth to deliver their thought. There is more in what he says than he knows; deep things he has not divined, rules of life he has not comprehended, echoes of an immeasurable life he has not realized in its fulness. If he understands all which he says, in all its meanings and relations, as reason may take note of them, then he is no poet. There is more

Pierce Library
Eastern Oregon University
1410 L Avenue

in man than reason defines, more in his experience than the understanding can describe; and therefore it is the poet finds a place for his song and a demand for his singing. The larger any truth which comes near to man's life, the less clearly can it be defined, the less is it possible for any words to tell us what it really means and is. Affections, and the soul's vision, bear meaning to us in relation to our own experience and capacity. The same words give much to one, little to another. It is not so in geometry; it is not so in physiology. In these regions of scientific fact there is but one voice to be uttered, and every person gets from the facts the same meaning. The smaller the value, the greater the accuracy. The dead rock can be perfectly described; but the mother's love is not to be brought within the limits of the finest poem or the most exquisite picture. There is always that which is beyond the limits of description, beyond the methods of reason. Into this region of the largest of all thoughts, the noblest of all experiences, the region of life and its soul-realities, comes the poet. What he has lived he pours forth in his song, telling men what he has seen and what he is. Nothing beyond that can he ever sing with power to touch other

men. If he has loved, then love will be in his song. If he has seen God as one of the pure in heart may see him, then earth and heaven cannot keep that out of his poem. The moment he stands before us in his singing, with the true light of song kindling his face, that moment we shall know what manner of man he is; that hour is his heart confessed. So it is the poet helps us to know what we cannot define, to touch the experiences of others with a sense of reality. He does not define the love surpassing the love of women, but his words become so transfused with that love as to kindle the like of it in ourselves.

That which is expressed in poetic form is not any the less true, but all the more true, because too large for any logical statement. Astronomy is the only purely exact science, conformable to the mathematical test; and it deals with matter only in relations of quantity and position. Next to this is Physics, into which more complex forces and relations enter; but in which exactness is less often to be obtained. Chemistry presents a field of still more subtle and intangible forces; precision and certainty are so much the farther removed. The higher the science and its materials, the greater its importance, the more complex

its relations, and the more of life there enters into it, by so much the more are the conclusions obtained wanting in precision. The exact sciences deal only with dead matter. The more life and perfection and beauty, the less we know or can know by the means of absolute statement. The man of science can tell us all we wish to know about a dead moon or a piece of granite rock, but about a flower that grows by the wayside he must have the aid of the poet before he can discover all that it is to man.

Common sense can speak the facts of ordinary affairs. Reason can unriddle the problems of the understanding, and tell us the plain prose of life. The great things of existence, those nearest to our hearts and imaginations, the problems of being and pure living, are never measured by science. These are so great we get only some hint about them here and there, some glimpse of their larger and subtler meanings, some flash of light for a moment. We must turn to philosophy, religion, poetry, and art for an answer to all the deepest questions life suggests to us; and then we shall find no perfect answers, no entirely satisfactory explanations. The greater and more important a thing is, the less can we

know about it with the aid of science; we must let feeling and imagination flow in upon it when we would get the highest results; and this produces poetry.

In some directions poetry offers us the best and surest knowledge we can have. We should have no difficulty in believing this did we not constantly forget the manifold nature of man's powers and ignore some of the noblest faculties of his mind. Man is not merely a being endowed with reason and a conscience; he has also affections, emotions, and imagination. To know the whole truth, imagination is as essential as reason. Life cannot be judged correctly unless the emotions offer their testimony. Poetry is as real as science. It is the result of applying emotion and imagination to the facts of nature and life. It is the product of feeling in responsive attitude towards beauty, or it is the imaginative glow and thrill which all deep and true things produce in us. Coleridge defines it as "the blossom and fragrancy of all human knowledge, human thoughts, human passions, emotions, language." Matthew Arnold truly says that poetry does not consist in "the power of drawing out in black and white an explanation of the mystery of the universe, but

the power of so dealing with things as to awaken in us a wonderfully full, new, and intimate sense of them, and of our relations to them; when this sense is awakened in us as to objects without us, we feel ourselves to be in contact with the essential nature of those objects, to be no longer bewildered and oppressed by them, but to have their secret, and to be in harmony with them; and this feeling calms and satisfies us as no other can." This is the power of poetry, that it satisfies us, that it fills the heart, that it lifts the whole individual being up into a responsive attitude towards nature, man, and God.

Wordsworth clearly saw that, while science gives us truth, poetry gives us what is even more important. It clothes the skeleton of nature with life and beauty. It is the life and essential nature of whatever we see and know. It is the fragrant bloom of the universe, that gives promise of a new life springing up in it. It is the higher spirit of science; and thus Wordsworth defined it, in words which are full of truth and beauty alike: "The knowledge both of the poet and the man of science is pleasure; but the knowledge of the one cleaves to us as a necessary part of existence, our natural and inalienable inheritance; the other is

a personal and individual acquisition, slow to come to us, and by no habitual and direct sympathy connecting us with our fellow-beings. The man of science seeks truth as a remote and unknown benefactor; he cherishes and loves it in his solitude: the poet, singing a song in which all human beings join with him, rejoices in the presence of truth as our visible friend and hourly companion."

To know is not enough for man. We may know all about the stars; but that knowledge does not take the place of the awe and wonder and sense of mystery which the nightly heavens give us when we look up to them with the eyes of the poet. We may know all the bones in a baby's body, have all its physiology at our tongue's end; but that does in no way replace a mother's delight in it or that knowledge of the babe which comes out of her affection. This halo which the higher nature in man casts about all things, with the aid of emotion and imagination, is as real as the stars; and without it life would be shorn of its glory and nature of its beauty. It is in this inner region of human experience that poetry finds its place and justification. While there is beauty or deep feelings or sublime

thoughts or mighty deeds, poetry will continue to charm the mind of man and weave about him the magic influence of its spirit.

The poet shows us things in their living relations and harmony. He shows us life as it is; presents us with the living beauty and gives us a consummated impression and effect. The man of science must destroy before he can know; he cuts to pieces what he cannot bring to life. Science and its methods

> — lay life's house bare to its inmost room
> With lens and scalpel.

This is necessary, and must not be complained of; the results thus obtained are important even to the poet, and vastly helpful in all the daily affairs of life. Science is not to be scorned for the sake of poetry, or its methods and their value belittled. It is enough to say, in behalf of poetry, that science does not give us all we wish to know, does not present all the effects which can be obtained from life and nature, and does not solve the mystery of existence. In his "Each and All," Emerson announces a truth which justifies the larger look at things which is the poet's. Nature is beautiful as a whole, in its own relations and orderings. The caged bird loses its charm, be-

cause the wood, the sky, and all nature are taken away from about it; and it is no longer a part of that wide-reaching impression which makes the variety, delight, and beauty of nature.

I thought the sparrow's note from heaven,
Singing at dawn on the alder bough;
I brought him home, in his nest, at even;
He sings the song, but it cheers not now,
For I did not bring home the river and sky;—
He sang to my ear — they sang to my eye.

The thrill of joy, the glow of poetic emotion, the sense of all-pervading life and mystery, which we have often felt when we looked on a beautiful landscape the poet has well described: —

Beneath my feet
The ground-pine curled its pretty wreath,
Running over the club-moss burrs;
I inhaled the violet's breath;
Around me stood the oaks and firs;
Pine-cones and acorns lay on the ground;
Over me soared the eternal sky,
Full of light and of Deity;
Again I saw, again I heard,
The rolling river, the morning bird;—
Beauty through my senses stole;
I yielded myself to the perfect whole.

In one of the most impressive passages in all his writings, Wordsworth has also described the effect which may be produced upon the poet by

nature, in intimate communion with her. He describes a youth, when, standing on

> the naked top
> Of some bold headland, he beheld the sun
> Rise up, and bathe the world in light! He looked—
> Ocean and earth, the solid frame of earth,
> And ocean's liquid mass, in gladness lay
> Beneath him;—far and wide the clouds were touched,
> And in their silent faces could be read
> Unutterable love. Sound needed none,
> Nor any voice of joy; his spirit drank
> The spectacle; sensation, soul, and form
> All melted into him: they swallowed up
> His animal being; in them did he live,
> And by them did he live; they were his life.
> In such access of mind, in such high hour
> Of visitation from the living God,
> Thought was not; in enjoyment it expired.
> No thanks he breathed, he proffered no request;
> Rapt into still communion that transcends
> The imperfect offices of prayer and praise,
> His mind was a thanksgiving to the Power
> That made him; it was blessedness and love.

This response of man's nature to the beautiful is one of the most remarkable features of his life and mind. The poetical disposition grows out of this sense of beauty, and from the glow and fervor it gives to the whole being. It comes, too, from a sense of our harmonious relations to a harmonious universe, from a feeling that man and nature respond to and rightly interpret each

other; and that they harmoniously blend, as do two notes of music. Nor is this effect limited to man's relations to nature; it is produced by all man's experience in which feeling, beauty, and imagination have a part.

Poetry enters into those higher regions of human experience concerning which no definite account can be given; where all words fail; about which all we know is to be obtained by hints, symbols, poetic figures, and imagings. Poetry is truer and more helpful than prose, because it penetrates those regions of feeling, beauty, and spiritual reality, where definitions have no place or justification. There would be no poetry if life were limited to what we can understand; nor would there be any religion. Indeed, the joy, the beauty, and the promise of life would all be gone if there were nothing which reaches beyond our powers of definition. The mystery of existence makes the grandeur and worth of man's nature, as it makes for him his poetry and his religion. Poetry suggests, hints, images forth, what is too wonderful, too transcendent, too near primal reality, too full of life, beauty, and joy, for explanation or comprehension. It embodies man's longing after the Eternal One, expresses

his sense of the deep mystery of Being, voices his soul-sorrow, illumines his path with hope and objects of beauty. Man's aspiration, his sense of imperfection, his yearning for a sustaining truth and reality as the life within and over all things, find expression in poetry; because it offers the fittest medium of interpretation for these higher movements of soul. Whenever the soul feels deeply, or is stirred by a great thought, the poetic form of utterance at once becomes the most natural and desirable for its loving and faithful interpretation.

Man has within him a need for the food which does not perish; he always is finding anew that he cannot live by bread alone. His mind will crave truth, his heart love, somewhat to satisfy the inward needs of life. A heavenly homesickness will draw him away from the material to those æsthetic and spiritual realities which are at the source of the truest poetry. Whenever these wants find fit interpretation, the poet and the poetic method of expression appear and give to them outward forms of beauty. Consequently the poet is

> One in whom persuasion and belief
> Have ripened into faith, and faith become
> A passionate intuition.

He is roused and inspired by the world in which he lives; it carries him away with its beauty and its reality, and he pours forth the impressions which it makes upon him with a sense of creative delight. The semi-unconsciousness and the ecstasy with which his mind is wrapped, testify to the glow and the ardor and the rapture in which his work is done. Then "he thinks God's thoughts after him," in a fresh access of creative power; and he, too, becomes the maker of worlds and the creator of new beings.

The man of science regards the universe as a problem to be solved; the poet discovers it to be the endless forth-putting of a beautiful and bountiful life. For him it is a wonderful epic of life and death to be read; a great picture to be gazed at with longing and soul-imbibing eyes, or a song whose passion and rapture fill his heart with quenchless joy. He would infuse himself with its spirit, and lift himself to the level of its beauty. It is to him a work of art that satisfies him for the moment, but into which a higher life and a more consummate spirit are ever being poured. The song of a deathless singer, it unfolds new heights and depths, new ardors of passion, fresh pathos and hope, and a widening glory and range of

power, as the harmony proceeds and the singer gives himself more and more to the purpose of making his singing an image of his own being. To touch the harp with some echoes of the Master's unfading music is the aim and joy of the poet. Ever within him is heard, in dreams and waking hours alike, that perfect music of the Abounding Life, that quenchless song of the stars as they spin, of flowers as they bloom, of women as they love, and of men as they aspire; and it incarnates itself in him until he becomes an æolian harp to repeat it for the sustainment of human hearts.

As one note of music accords with and completes another, the poet takes the universe into himself and repeats it with a finer harmony and as a note of richer music. He does not look at it from without; but he is one with it, and thrills with its every rapture. Because he loves it, and opens his heart to its every whisper of confidence, it tells him its inmost secrets, and adopts him as its own.

The poet is the child of nature, as he is the child of humanity. He is the creature of the deepest affection of these wedded ones, and cherished of them both with a love the most tender

and sympathetic. He has played about the knees of humanity, and he has romped with nature over hill and dale. The love of the one and the beauty of the other come to him as his own, and are the fruitful inspiration of his song. As they combine and harmonize in his nature, a life more ample, and with a new glory of being, goes forth to meet the morn of a new day. Thus gifted with the largess of spiritual vision, the poet becomes the world's prophet and inspirer. The glory of stars as they first flash into the field of human vision, and of Edens that beckon to men out of the far-off inviting future, reflect themselves in his face, and kindle there a new light to lead men upward. He invites men to new countries of the ideal and to untrodden worlds of spiritual reality. He awakens in them a thirst for the fountains of life and beauty, and he gives them a longing to go forth to that country beyond the borders of material fact, and to partake of its satisfying waters. He makes men pilgrims; he makes them searchers. Under his inspiration the present ceases to satisfy; they behold the more perfect, and will not be content until they have possessed it.

True poetry consists not in a form of expres-

sion, but in the higher spirit which it contains. There is more true poetry in one of the prose chapters of Ruskin than in many a volume of newly turned verse. Beauty and symmetry of language, involving rhyme and rhythm, increase and intensify beauty of thought and sentiment; but in themselves rhyme and metre cannot make poetry. There must be an inward beauty, an informing spirit of creative power, or the poetry is wanting. It is beauty, feeling and imagination alone which make poetry; and if these are absent it is the baldest prose which results, whatever the form given to the language.

The true antithesis, as Coleridge suggests, is not between poetry and prose, but between poetry and science. Science analyzes; poetry creates. Science seeks for facts; poetry for life. The poet penetrates to the heart of the world through sympathy. He reads it as a lover; his heart goes forth to it as to its own. He is one that draws into his soul all that the world and life can reveal, and who presses beyond them towards the goal of being, where all that is hidden is to be made known. He knows the heart of his beloved, because his heart is one with hers. Over and above what the student of human nature can

tell him about her he knows her as a being of affection and spiritual apprehension, whose nature has been brought into living and loving sympathy with his own. Life has revealed herself to the poet as one beloved with an affection the deepest and truest.

Poetry is a process of creation, and the poet is a maker. Law reigns in what he makes, but life reigns even more. It is to be measured by its vitality, by the depth and superbness and wholeness of the life it manifests, and not by its fine ordering of syllable and sound. The greater the poet the more he makes form yield itself subservient to the richness of his imagination and the deep ardors of his passion. The world-poets make the technique of their art a plastic instrument in their hands, yielding not to it as to something which controls them, but working with it, as if it had become a part of their own natures. In our own day we see Browning holding himself aloof from the rigid requirements of the poetic art, sporting with rhyme and metre, and refusing to yield himself to the enchantments of this fair Delilah. He is conscious that poetry has a higher purpose and power than lie embosomed in these things of outward form. He rejects and scorns

the beauty which has no other meaning than color and decoration in dress.

Browning's independence of the mere technique of poetry is to be admired, for we have had quite too much of slavish conformity to outward rules. Poetic independence is to be desired, freedom of utterance, the greatness and originality which rise in lofty courage of spirit above the rules which have been laid down by the mere ingenuity of men. The more rules the worse for art; and the more closely they are followed the less life and genius are the result. The ages when rules are most loved and studied are the ages when stiffness and rigidity predominate, when originality and independence least assert themselves. The creative spirit makes its own rules or comes close to those of nature herself. Not, however, that lawlessness is to be the rule in art; nothing of the kind, but that the creative faculties make rules which cannot be defined to the intellect. They see instinctively what is best, and are inclined, when free, to do what is most truly in accordance with nature and life.

This independence is characteristic of our century. The age of Burns and Wordsworth would not longer follow the rules which guided the age

of Dryden and Pope; it broke away from them, and came back to simpler forms and means of expression. That spirit has continued down to the present time, and asserts itself in many an ignoring of the methods of the schools. It is to be seen in the lawlessness of such men as Whitman, who throw aside all form; in the disregard of rules and rhyme by such lovers of feeling as Mrs. Browning; in the rugged utterance of forcible thought on the part of men like Browning, and even in the perfect music and melody of such men as Tennyson and Swinburne. These last have shown the same tendency as the others, in that they have widened the range of the old forms, no longer being content with the traditional laws of poetry. They will comply with rules only as the rules are the expression of living impulses of poetic desire, and as they assist the mind on the way to harmony and perfection of form.

Poetry cannot be made by rule. The more the rules are thought of the less is the result in poetry. It is true enough that there must be a groundwork of rule, and compliance with the fixed requirements of form; but the poet who is obliged to keep these in his mind, and to work

conscious of them, is sure never to produce anything worthy of the name of true art. The poet who counts his syllables to see if the lines are of the right length, is no poet worthy of the name. He must know as by instinct, even more surely than if he counted, that they are right, or there is no hope for him. The musician gives much time to the study of the technique of his art, and he recognizes that it rests on a basis of rigid mathematical rule; but with this there must be a soul for music, an ear that tells if it is right, and a heart that catches up in an instant all the pathos and loveliness of it. The passion and the instinct for music absent, the most perfect knowledge of the rules and laws is utterly incapable of producing it. These given, music will result, even if there is no technical knowledge.

So it is in poetry; the soul must have a touch of heavenly beauty in it, or no poetry can grow out of it. Rules will not put it in or take it out. This the rules will do, however; dry it up, and turn the pure stream of that water of life from a babbling brook full of delight, as it pours down the mountain side, into a mere ditch, very regular, but wanting all charm and beauty. Not that there can be genuine poetry without rules and

form, for these are always necessary in their place; but they are, and must be kept, subordinate; and they are not to be enforced against the poet who chooses to create some other way for himself than that which is in common use.

Life is not manifested in customs and costumes, but in spontaneity and spirit. The more man lives by conventional rule the more he lives on the surface of his nature, and the more he fails to reach the deepest springs of original and noble purpose. If he lives to conform he lives feebly, and he can never be himself in a life-giving manner. So in poetry; it must come to life and expression, not out of the conventional and traditional, but out of what the poet has seen for himself, and experienced with his own soul. If it has this latter quality, it can in some measure dispense with the merely technical requirements. All true poetry is lived; is music, harmony, and grandeur in the soul first, and then puts itself into words in that way which will best produce upon others the same effects which have been produced upon the poet or which will kindle in other hearts the living fire of truth and beauty which were first in his heart. If this power is carried swiftly

and surely from one to the other, and the poet has the gift of making others see what he has seen, feel what he has felt, and believe what he has believed, the form little matters. It is this power of kindling the fires of truth and beauty in other souls which is the real power and charm of the poet; and if this is wanting, all else that is of much value is also absent. It is not enough to please, if pleasing is all, though that has its place and its value as truly as other things have theirs; but genuine poetry is the outgrowth of what is otherwise intrinsically good, and for other reasons. Nothing genuinely pleases which does not do more than gratify for the moment. True pleasure grows out of roots of beauty, truth, and right; and it must always have ends other than its own.

The poet must be either a teacher or an artist; or, what is better, he may be both in one. Therefore, he can never stop at form or at what delights and charms merely. He must go on to the expression of something of deep and real abidingness of thought or beauty. This comes at last to be the real thing for which he works, which he seeks to bring into expression with such power and grandeur in it as he can produce, and

which he wills to send forth for the sake of this higher impression on the world.

Poetry is the interpretation of life in response to emotion and imagination. Its object is the satisfaction of ideal desire. It gives pleasure by means of its artistic form, the human mind naturally seeking to express its more elevated thoughts and emotions in rhythmic language. This is the artistic meaning of poetry; but the soul of it is the life of man uplifted and transformed by the world of the ideal. There is nothing of poetry in the bare realism of nature and life. Nature is lovely only when a poet's eye looks upon it. Fishermen toiling with their nets or peasants bowing at the sound of a bell calling them to prayer are objects of artistic pleasure because of the human sentiments associated with them. A man exists before a poet is possible; and it is the man's soul which gives to poetry all there is in it that delights other men.

If poetry is an imitation, it is an imitation of what is in the heart of the poet, and not of what is in nature. Not even Homer can imitate a mountain in his verse. He can so describe the mountain as to awaken in others the same emotions which it produced in him when he beheld

it. The beauty of poetry, its charm and its power, have come out of the poet's own mind, as it has been impressed by the beauties of nature or the deeds of men. True it is that if nature did not arouse him the poet would not create; but the process always begins in the seeing heart of the poet. It is "a living soul" out of which poetry grows. The life to which great thoughts and deep feelings come is the fountain whence flows the poetic stream.

The true poet is the man of his time who is most alive, who feels, sees, and knows the most. In the measure of his life he is the greatest man of his age and country. His eye sees farther and more clearly; his heart beats more warmly and with a more universal sympathy; his thought runs deeper and with a swifter current, than is the case with other men. He is the oracle and guide, the inspirer and the friend, of those to whom he sings. He creates life under the ribs of dead tradition; he illumines the present with heart-flames of beaconing truth, and he makes the future seem like home-joys far off but drawing ever nigher. The poet is the world's lover. He is the youth to whom fresh thoughts come with each new generation.

In a logical, scientific, and philosophical sense poetry has nothing to teach. When it aims at being didactic it ceases to be poetry, and becomes prose — often very dull — written in the form of verse. What poetry has to teach it teaches as poetry, and not as morality, science, or history. It is very certain, however, that the true poet has something to say which he alone is capable of making known to the world.

Art reveals to us the fact that nature is free rather than bound fast in law. It shows the life there is in nature, its spontaneity, its vitality of essence, its spiritual meaning, and its freedom within its own limits. It is an incarnation of the All-Beautiful and the All-Loving, and it ever glows and blooms with the life that comes from Him. It touches the heart of man with a sense of life immeasurable, and ever invites him to aspirations and ideals beyond itself, and which it cannot in any degree satisfy. The natural is an invitation to the ideal, and it will not adopt to its heart those content with itself.

The poet is one whose whole being is responsive to the inner spirit of nature and life. The world-poets affect us by the completeness of their personality, by the roundness and integrity of

their manhood, and by the symmetry of the impression they make. Poets of an inferior genius may possess an exaggerated development of feeling, fancy, and imagination; but the world-poets show no such defect. They have balance, soundness, and solidarity of the faculties. There is no excess in imagination, no deficiency in reason; but every mental gift interprets itself with power and grandeur in the art of poetry.

True poetry is for instruction as much as for pleasure, though it inculcate no formal lessons. Right moral teaching is by example far more than by precept; and the real poet teaches through the higher purpose he arouses, by the stimulus he gives, and by the purer motive he awakens. He gives no precepts to recite, no homilies to con over, no rules for formal repetition; but he gives the spirit of life and the impulse of true activity. An infallible test of the great poet is that he inspires us with a sense of the richness and grandeur of life. If his passion is wild, his fancy exuberant, his morality intrusive, or his reasoning dogmatic, he cannot sit in the company of the greatest. Homer, Dante, and Shakspere impress us with the grand proportions and the perfect healthiness

of their personality. No exaggeration and no retardation are to be discovered in them. Each represents the highest spirit of the society to which he belongs, what is best and most vital in it, and with a wonderful completeness of interpretation. Neither made it his purpose to teach the purest religion and philosophy of his time, but each has done that with a finish and clearness we find nowhere else. Not a touch of didacticism is to be found in the poetry of these men; but what teaching is there! what grand views of life! what profound insights into the highest facts of human nature! what stimulus to true activity of soul!

Byron is the poet of the excess of passion, Wordsworth of the excess of intellect, and Keats of the excess of imagination. It is their excesses almost alone which hinder these men from taking their places with the great world-poets; but the exaggeration in each case is fatal to any such claim. In the case of each there is some claim of truth which finds striking emphasis, but we feel that it needs correction by the adjusting law of symmetry. Truth is not made larger by a want of harmony; but it is hindered of its rightful results. As a great spiritual teacher Words-

worth loses in power because he is not a true poet in the largest sense. When the poet stands clearest revealed, the universe he would interpret is brought the nearest to our sight.

Art never is an object of pure enjoyment alone. If so accepted in theory, it never is so in reality. It modifies thought, it influences moral action, it affects motives, and it changes the whole tone of the emotional life. It may be enjoyed without speculative bias, but not without stamping its essential qualities on the motives and actions of its devotees. However much inclined the individual artist may be to yield himself joyfully to beauty wherever he finds it, luxuriating in the stimulus it gives to his emotional and imaginative life, letting it flood his soul with pure delight and rapture, it surely influences the whole tenor of his moral and intellectual being. An evil effect has been wrought on the human spirit by the very fact of disconnecting art from intellectual truth and moral action. Especially does the presence of art affect bodies of men in a manner the most profoundly significant. When men yield themselves to the enjoyment of beauty in and for itself, moral enervation and intellectual lassitude follow. The times of great moral awak-

ening, when the sense of duty presses home closely upon the mind and upon the conscience, are never those in which art flourishes. On the other hand, when art is divorced from ethics and philosophy, its influence is destructive of a harmonious life. If pursued for its own sake, it becomes a gilded palace of corruption; a palace fair outwardly with color, music, and joy, but inwardly disordered and pestilential. Balance and harmony are absolutely essential to the truest results in art.

The negative effect of art is enough in itself to show us that there must be in it something to teach, when it is true to its own functions. Especially is this true of poetry, which, more than any other form of art, relates itself to what is truest, purest, and most aspiring in human nature. There has never been a great poet who was not also a prophet and a guide to men. Homer, Æschylus, Vergil, Lucretius, Dante, Cervantes, Shakspere, Milton, Goethe, and Victor Hugo have impressed the world with their own personality in a way to stamp indelibly upon human thought their conception of its nature and its higher issues. Was Shakspere no teacher because we cannot tell of what religion he was or

what philosophy he accepted? We may not find in him a Catholic or a Protestant theology, an inductive or an idealistic philosophy; but we do find in him a profoundly wise and deep-searching interpretation of life itself. He has sympathy with whatever is human; he teaches us to know the heart and the mind of man.

The poet is a builder of worlds, and the progenitor of ideal beings. What is he shapes to new fashions and brings to a more consummated expression. He reveals the heart of the actual, and he forecasts the ideal. What is to be delights him, as well as what has been. What is to be he knows by what is, for he reads the prophetic meaning of all life and nature. He is man's foreseer and God's foreteller. The world is a development and man a becoming; but the grandeur of this growth through endless ages the poet makes known by the spirit of aspiring life which is at the heart of his noblest song.

There is no faith too great for the poet and no hope too large. Not the petty griefs and vexations of the moment make up for him the sum of life; but he sees the rich variety of the world, and that its objects blend into a glorious harmony and beauty. With heroic purpose he goes forth

to meet the future, confident it will open to him richer treasures than any he has known hitherto, and that an exhaustless wealth of beauty and joy awaits his search.

The poet worships at the triple shrine of beauty, love, and truth; and his mission it is to teach men that all other objects and places of veneration are but faint imitations of this one true form of faith. Beauty is blind until it is joined to truth, and unfaithful until it is joined to love. The winsomeness of beauty, the delight of love, and the mastership of truth are to the poet forms of the highest good, and all of them find issue in the glory of a perfected life. For themselves they have no end or object but to serve each other, and to give life a higher consummation. When harmonized, so that they become one in purpose and spirit, they are the face of God revealed to the vision of the poet. All blessing and glory and honor come through them, and are made known by them. Life ever comes short of its promise until these three walk hand in hand to give it guidance. Not three, but one, are beauty, love, and truth; for they are but forms of the same ideal reality. They are ever the poet's guides and inspirers, and from them

come the harmonic outburst of his song. They teach him the meaning of life, and reveal to him its inmost glory.

The poet is not a maker of rhymes, but the interpreter of life. Whoever gives to life a grand and true and harmonic interpretation, whatever the form of expression he adopts, is a poet. The being of poetry is in its thought, its sentiment, and its inspiring quality, and not in its form. The highest need of man ever is to have his own being, his own heart, and his own noblest desire, interpreted for him, so that he may know himself, and what his true relations to life and man. The poet gives him this interpretation, and in a form the most subtly satisfactory and impressive. There is a quickening power in the poet's loftiest words that penetrates the very being of man, and transforms him with a new desire and a finer purpose. To give to man's life the harmony of the richest music, and the fulness of being which comes of blending his life with God's, is to the poet his mission and his delight.

Whether Spenser, Shakspere, Wordsworth, or Tennyson, the poet is a dreamer of dreams, and of dreams that come closer than other men's waking thoughts to the inmost secrets of life. He talks

with nature as with a friend and a lover, and she opens to him the book in which her secrets are written. It is the ideal truth of God he finds throughout all the phases of life and nature, and truth which is fit to minister to man as a being of rational aims and a moral destiny.

The poet is the true teacher of men, for he inspires and exalts them, and opens to them a knowledge of their real being. He gives them life and hope and eternal joy, as they partake of his thought and catch the spirit he would impart. He has no dogmas to assert, no precepts to inculcate, but the glory of life to reveal. His mission it is to give life more of harmony, to widen the realms of sympathy, and to deepen the power of sentiment. His manner of teaching is the same that love makes use of, by access of life, and not by outward admonition. His precepts are insights, his dogmas intuitions, and the knowledge he imparts purer sentiments and sympathies. He is God's forerunner and prophet, and the blessed companion of man. With eyes lifted and heart buoyant, he foresees the future through his knowledge of the ideal, and he leads us to forsake the bare present.

II.

TENNYSON.

MELODY gives a sensuous existence to poetry; for does not the meaning of a poem become embodied in melody? — *Beethoven.*

As long as the English language is spoken, the word-music of Tennyson will charm the ear; and when English has become a dead language, his wonderful concentration of thought into luminous speech, the exquisite pictures in which he has blended all the hues of reflection, feeling, and fancy, will cause him to be read as we read Homer, Pindar, and Horace. — *George Eliot.*

COLOR, like the dawn, flows over the horizon from his pencil in waves so rich that we do not miss the central form. Through all his refinements, too, he has reached the public, — a certificate of good sense and general power, since he who aspires to be the English poet must be as large as London, but in his own kind. But he wants a subject, and climbs no mount of vision to bring its secrets to the people. He contents himself with describing the Englishman as he is, and proposes no better. There are all degrees in poetry, and we must be thankful for every beautiful talent. — *Emerson.*

NOT of the howling dervishes of song,
Who craze the brain with their delirious dance,
Art thou, O sweet historian of the heart!
Therefore to thee the laurel-leaves belong,
To thee our love and our allegiance,
For thy allegiance to the poet's art.

— *Longfellow.*

NO English poet, with the possible exception of Byron, has so ministered to the natural appetite for poetry in the people as Tennyson. Byron did this — unintentionally, as all genius does — by warning and arousing their dormant sentiment: Tennyson by surprising them into the recognition of a new luxury in the harmony and movement of poetic speech. — *Bayard Taylor.*

II.

TENNYSON.

English literature divides itself into well-defined periods. The age of Elizabeth cannot be mistaken for that of any other, and its great leading features have not since been repeated. Not less marked was the eighteenth century, a time of skepticism in philosophy, classicism in literature, courtly formality in social life, and Deism in religion. Reaction from that period, under the influence of Methodism, the French revolution, German idealism, and the growth of naturalism, led to the great literary era of the first half of the nineteenth century. That era exhibited a love of the romantic, as seen in Walter Scott; of the natural world as the dwelling-place of the Divine, as seen in Wordsworth; of faith in a new social era for mankind, as seen in Shelley.

Throughout the revolutionary period was exhibited a remarkable faith in the regenerating

power of ideas. Men expected to see a new world rise out of the old order of formal and stagnant life. In all directions burst forth an eager desire for fresh and spontaneous thought, and for a natural expression of the human faculties. Freedom in political and social life was not more clearly demanded than in literature and art. The human mind burst its bonds, and soared away into an atmosphere of pure inspiration. It seemed to have gained a new access of power, to have found itself capable of higher things than it had before dared undertake.

The classical habit of mind of the era of Pope and Johnson was now discarded. The new law of literary composition was that of the old saying, "Look in thy heart and write." Sentiment, passion, sympathy, aspiration, were now free, and spoke themselves out with abandon and joy. Burns singing of rustic life and of a humanity knowing no distinctions but those which pertain to man as man; Wordsworth turning to nature as a mystical revelation of God, and to the simple life of the plainest people; Shelley crying out for liberty and an unrestrained utterance of the thoughts which were in him, make plain to us the nature of the revolutionary era, as it was ex-

hibited in English literature. Men seemed to have lost themselves in emotion and aspiration, and in a desire to accept the simple truth of things.

Something too ethereal and over-wrought was in the Wordsworthian time. It laid too high a claim to the creative power of genius, a claim which time cannot wholly justify. It saw in genius something abnormal or supernatural, something that sharply set off those possessing it from all other men. It was a time of too much excitement and of too buoyant a temper. A reaction was inevitable, because human nature cannot always exist on the heights.

From about the year 1840 a new era is to be dated in English literature. Signs of it were to be seen even earlier, while many traces of the revolutionary period remain until the present day. The most effective of causes in overthrowing the revolutionary idea was the discovery of the continuity of human development. There were men who saw this truth even when the revolutionary fervor was at its height. In an artistic way no one saw it more distinctly and absolutely than Walter Scott, all whose work grew out of his happy vision of the continuous

life flowing through the ages of human history. Even Wordsworth saw it most clearly in his later years; and it was one of the causes of that reaction which took place in his mind. It was manifest in the romantic movement in Germany, which led so many of the most ardent of the younger poets into the Catholic church. It appeared in the Oxford reaction in behalf of the life of the earlier ages of the church. More distinctly than all, as a conception of human life, it found expression in the transcendental philosophy of Germany. Transcendentalism had its revolutionary side; but it also had its side of faith in an unfolding order in human affairs.

Out of the revolutionary period came the idea of progress. In France progress was understood to mean revolution; in Germany it was accepted as the outcome of spiritual causes. Rationalism, working in a revolutionary period, hoped to create the world of human society anew, in obedience to reason and the idea of right. Gradually it appeared that each generation is a development from the preceding ones, and that there are causes in human nature itself why life must flow on slowly, and along appointed channels. If intuition opens to the individual the

avenues of the highest truth, none the less for mankind there is a process of development and an order in the unfoldment of its manifestations.

From the speculative idea of progress, aided by wonderful investigations into the order of natural phenomena, grew the doctrine of evolution. The result has been a remarkable increase of confidence in a historic continuity underlying all movements of humanity in every direction. There has followed an overthrowing of the revolutionary idea in politics, in speculative thought, and in literature. The past of mankind has been studied as never before. With the clew of continuity every period of human history has been subjected to new investigation and interpretation. The effect on literature has been of great importance, leading to a sympathetic appreciation of the spirit of past times, and to a cultivation of the ideas expressed in the great periods of human thought.

Even in the revolutionary era Keats and Landor had been drawn to Greek thought and life. To all intents Landor was a pagan, a lover of the beauty and freshness inherent in the Greek mythology, and full of scorn for the high moral aim demanded by Christianity. The tendency

thus manifest has found ample expression since the death of the marvellous Keats, who, more than any other, revived the spirit of Greek beauty in modern times. Almost every poet of the Victorian era has been influenced by the objectivity of Greek art, and by a desire to renew its life of natural beauty and healthy development. Other poets have sought to bring back the uncorrupted ardor and naturalness of the time of Chaucer. They would sing of the old fresh times of the world, before men were burdened with too many thoughts, and ere they were anxious to solve the problem of the universe.

As distinguishing the evolutionary period from the time of revolution the growth in the love of beauty and art is most significant. Until the present century men had not thought of beauty for its own sake, as something to be cultivated for its promise of good to the human spirit. Now they turned to art with unbounded enthusiasm. This influence is very marked in the poetry of Tennyson, as compared with that of Wordsworth. To the inward motive and spirit of poetry, Coleridge and those of his school gave the chief importance. Great as Coleridge was as an artist, he laid the main stress on that in poetry

which makes it an interpretation of human life. Especially was this true of Wordsworth, who was a prophet not less than a poet. Beautiful ideas made the poetry of the revolutionary era with those men who were its most characteristic products. They did not give attention to form so much as to sentiment and emotion, for these brought to their poetry life and an expansive power. Yet there were men, like Keats, Shelley, Coleridge, and Moore, to whom metrical beauty was a joy and an inspiration. Their influence, working in combination with the art-revival, has served to make the poetry of the Victorian era one of artistic beauty far more than of ideas. With the death of Wordsworth poetic inspiration suffered a relapse or a diminution in its power. What had been a thing of quickening life became a thing of joyous beauty. The spirit of man sought a new means of expression, and poetry for the time ceased to be a divine afflatus.

That which most of all characterizes the poetry of the Victorian era is its growth as an art. In other words, the poets of the present time are moved with the one thought that poetry is an art to be cultivated and developed. They do

not sing for the sake of giving fitting expression to their inner life, but that they may fashion something lovely to the artistic perceptions. It is beauty of words, rather than beauty of thought, which they seek. Poetry is to them an art, rather than an inspiration.

The poetry of the Victorian era has also a tendency towards realism. This is partly due to the influence of Goethe and Wordsworth, and partly to the growth of scientific habits of mind. Wordsworth was a realist in his poetry because in his philosophy he was an idealist. He saw in the outward world a direct manifestation of God; therefore it was to be accepted in its totality, and in its freshness of beauty. Another spirit came into poetry with the growth of scientific speculation, a spirit of doubt concerning the legitimacy of spiritual ideas and ideals. Over the fair dream of a world of light within this world of sense a shadow of doubt was cast. To Wordsworth, the real world was that of the light which never was on land or sea, a light far more deeply interfused with the truth of things than is that of setting suns. To the new thought which came with science there was a lessening of faith in the spiritual as spiritual, and an increase of doubt

concerning the ideal as something beyond the present apparent order of things.

As yet no one can say what will be the final artistic and literary result of the movement towards scientific speculation. That it has not been helpful to literature can now be said with perfect assurance, so far as its effect on poetry is concerned. It has created an atmosphere not conducive to poetic inspiration. The poet is a sensitive being, easily discouraged, and quickly made to feel that his singing is not required. To the poets science has as yet given no inspiration, no grand themes, no conception of life which is to them like a trumpet's call. Theoretically, science should put no obstacles in the way of the poet; but practically it has acted as a check of the most serious kind. In an age when new speculative ardors are awakened in men by the doctrine of evolution, the poets turn back to Greece, to mediæval life, or to the time of Chaucer for their inspiration as for their themes.

The new conception of the world which science has given us, working a vast change in our ideas about nature and man, must have a profound influence on the poets. That influence cannot at

first be felt in any other manner than one of depression and exhaustion. The scientific development of the eighteenth century was accompanied by weariness and weakness on the part of poetry. Every sign at the present time also indicates a lapse of poetic inspiration, and a growth of the human spirit in the direction of the pictorial arts, prose fiction, and historic insight.

As the individual must change the direction of his activity from time to time, so must a nation. When imagination is in full exercise, understanding must grow weak. When reason lords it over the life of man, artistic insight is repressed. In an age of revolutionary enthusiasm the sense of historic continuity is lost. None the less, in an age of scientific passion imagination loses its sway over men and ceases to be a guide in their conceptions of the world.

Nothing could have been more easily predicted, from a knowledge of mankind, than that the revolutionary era could not long continue. All high enthusiasms soon exhaust themselves and leave the human spirit discouraged and distraught. The age of Plato was a short one, and so was that of Raphael and that of Shakspere.

After singing through the rosy morn or dewy eve, men turn to the tasks of the day or to the slumbers of the night. So it is that an age of science succeeds to an age of poetry. It must needs be so, for poetry cannot feed us ever. We need truth as well as imagination, faith as well as song. The human spirit has an expansive power, which enables it to renew itself in fresh directions, when worn out by its highest efforts.

The Victorian era makes manifest its genius in prose fiction rather than in poetry. Men who, in a more poetic age, would have written verse of the best, now give themselves to the writing of novels. At the present time the novel answers to the demands of public taste in literature, because it is capable of expressing a greater degree of realism than is possible to poetry, and because it deals almost wholly with the experiences and characters of men. The nineteenth century has been marked above all others by its interest in man as man, and by its growing love of whatever pertains to humanity. It shows a deep wish to know about men as they are, in the actual facts of their daily lives. The old love of the hero and the ideal man has passed away. Nothing would less easily fit into the mood of the present time

than the spirit of chivalry. The artificial interpretation of life, out of which chivalry grew, and its continual striving for effect, find no response in the temper of the present time. Not by any means wholly given over to mechanic invention and commercial enterprise, as Ruskin would have us believe, our time wishes to lay hold of what is real, and to see the world and life as they are in themselves. To such a spirit poetry does not seem to be congenial.

There is no such poetic exhaustion at the present time, however, as that which took place in the eighteenth century. True poetry is being written; but it is of another kind than that of the age of Wordsworth. The poet now finds his inspiration in man, not in nature. It is the doings, the hopes, the aspirations, and the passions of men which give him his themes and his inspiration. This is an exhaustless source of quickening to the poet, and one which ought to stimulate him to his highest effort. The atmosphere of the present time may not be sufficiently electric to awaken the poet to a passion in behalf of man; but it is of man he sings when he gives us song which has in it true force and fire. More worthy in the poetry of the Victorian era than

any greatness of inspiration is its sympathy with man in all his moods, struggles, and hopes. In that appears a genuine promise for humanity, if not for song. And why should there not be in it the highest promise for the future of poetry itself? The poet is something more than an artist; and if he no longer writes great epics or tragedies, he may write that which will prove of the greatest worth to his fellows.

It is not to science we are to look for the future promise of poetry, but to the development of a deeper and a more sympathetic interest in man. Science is barren of all beauty until it has been transformed by the imagination, and made subservient to the ideal. The past and present of man afford beauty and inspiration in exhaustless store. History is a mighty panorama unfolding itself before the poet, from which he may select the scene most congenial to his genius and most stimulating to his gift of song. Nature will ever remain to the poet a source of joy and refreshment; but man will grow to be more and more the source of his inspiration. Love, sin, and death are themes no poet can render faded and old for those who come after him. Every child who comes into the world is a fresh poem, whose

experiences of heart and soul, could they be fully sung, would cast in the shade all Iliads, Æneids, and Divine Comedies.

The poetic spirit of the Victorian era has found its fullest and most characteristic expression in the poetry of Tennyson. What is great and what is weak in it he has exhibited as no other has done; and his is likely to remain through all future time its one representative name. For a knowledge of its temper and its inspiration we must turn to him.

I.

TENNYSON'S ancestry was a good one, and the surroundings of his youth were favorable to the development of a poet. Noble names appear on the list of his forefathers; and his own entrance into the nobility fits well into the traditions of his family. The place of his birth, however, lies far removed from all enterprise and active interests; and his home-life as a youth was quiet and simple. Somersby is a dreamy country village; but the scenery about has much of rural beauty.

The poet's father was a man of great stature, immense energy and strength, and of many accomplishments. He had somewhat of genius; and his vigorous mind sought expression in many directions, for he was a poet, painter, musician, architect, mathematician, and linguist. The mother was very sweet and gentle, gifted with a lively imagination, and devoutly religious. The

ten children of the family were handsome, bright, and poetic from their earliest years. They all began to make verses as soon as they could talk; and a favorite amusement in the evenings and on rainy days was the writing of poetry and romances. Four of the brothers have carried their early literary habits into manhood, though only in the case of Alfred has the literary taste been exercised other than as a pastime.

Alfred Tennyson was very early a poet, and even at the age of five years he is said to have shouted to the wind, when out in a storm, in these words: —

"I hear a voice that's speaking in the wind."

When sent to Louth, the home of his mother, to attend the grammar school there, in company with Charles, he began to write poetry in earnest. He had already read Byron with the greatest delight, and he began to pore over all the books he could reach which would satisfy his taste for poetry. He was attracted to Chaucer and the early English poets, and to the Greek pastoral poets. Especially did he find delight in Theocritus and Scott. At this time, also, he read Mallory's version of the legends of King Arthur, with the greatest enthusiasm. Such books as

these kindled his mind to a glow, and he was roused to great poetic projects. He planned a poem on King Arthur, laid out many schemes for it, wrote some fragments, but finally abandoned the subject, to return to it in later years.

While at Louth, in 1827, Charles and Alfred published a volume of poems, with the title, "Poems by Two Brothers." The names of the authors were not given. As the work of boys of eighteen and nineteen this volume showed much promise, but no one of the poems is of such merit as to attract any special interest apart from the fact that it came from Tennyson as a schoolboy. The mottoes and footnotes give evidence of much reading, but the style is affected by Byron, and the thought has no great value. The melody and perfect expression of later years did not appear here in such measure as to attract attention.

In 1829, when nearly twenty years old, Tennyson became a student at Trinity College, Cambridge University. Cambridge was at that time liberal in its tendencies, awake to new ideas, and influenced by German thought. It was the centre of the rising Broad Church movement, as Oxford was, at the same time, under the influ-

ence of Newman, Keble, and others, developing the High Church spirit. While it may not have been wholly in sympathy with such men as Maurice, Robertson, Kingsley, and Arnold, yet it did not close its doors to their influence, and Tennyson was deeply affected by the thought and spirit of this party; and his poetry is full of their religious ideas.

Tennyson's tutor at Trinity was Whewell, who is said to have had such high hopes for his genius as to allow him privileges he gave to no others. Among the young men Tennyson knew at Cambridge, and who have since made themselves known to the world, were Thackeray, his intimate friend of after years; Richard Monkton Milnes, the poet, who became Lord Houghton; Spedding, the biographer of Bacon; Trench and Alford, poets, theologians, and biblical students; Kemble, student of the literature and history of the northern nations of Europe; Kinglake, the historian of the Crimean war, and several others. Most of these men became his intimate friends and ardent admirers. He has addressed sonnets to Kemble ("Sonnet to J. M. K."), and to Brookfield, another of his intimate friends. Among others who have had a deep and abiding influ-

ence on his life and thought were John Sterling and Frederic Maurice, both of them leaders in the Broad Church movement. One of his finest personal poems is addressed to Maurice; and he has also addressed one full of tenderness and sympathy to Spedding ("To J. S.") on the death of his brother.

While yet at the University, in 1830, Tennyson published in London his "Poems, Chiefly Lyrical," a little volume of great promise. It contained those remarkable portraitures of fair women, which show so well the music of his poetry and the artistic tendency of his muse. It contained, also, his "Deserted House," one of the noblest of his shorter poems, his "Recollections of the Arabian Nights," "The Poet," "Circumstance," and other exquisite pieces. Even at this time, when only a little past twenty, Tennyson had begun to attract attention, of course mainly among those who knew him personally. In all his nature he is a poet, and his friends early saw that he was destined to do something excellent. So soon as 1830, before his volume of poems was published, Alford made this entry in his diary: "Looked over the Tennysons' poems at night; exquisite fellows. I know no two books of poetry

which have given me so much pleasure as their works." He referred to the volume published in Louth and to Charles Tennyson's poems of 1830.

A little later than this, in 1832, the sister of his friend Kemble, since known to the world as "Fanny Kemble," wrote these words about Tennyson, now published in her "Records of a Girlhood": "I am always a little disappointed with the exterior of our poet when I look at him, in spite of his eyes, which are very fine; but his head and face, striking and dignified as they are, are always too ponderous and massive for beauty in so young a man; and every now and then there is a slight sarcastic expression about his mouth, that almost frightens me, in spite of his shy manner and habitual silence. But, after all, it is delightful to see and to be with one that one admires and loves for what he has done, as I do him."

At this time Edward Fitzgerald, the translator of Omar Kháyyàm, wrote of him as being "a man at all points, of grand proportion and feature, significant of that inward chivalry becoming his ancient and honorable race."

It is very pleasant to have these early glimpses into Tennyson's character, these indications of

his rising fame, and this hint of the interest he awakened in those who knew him. He had already done work which gave him a commanding place as a poet. Now he was about to advance his fame by the publication, in 1832, of his "Poems." This volume showed a distinct advance on the one of two years before, in the way of a finer power of expression, deeper thought, and a clearer mastery of all the elements of poetry. It contained some of the best of his work, as well as some of those poems which have become most popular. Among the best known of his poems are "The May Queen," "The Miller's Daughter," and "Lady Clara Vere de Vere." Of the poems which have attracted attention by their thought, and their lofty spirit of inquiry into the subtler questions of life, are the "Palace of Art" and the "Lotos-Eaters." This volume also showed how greatly Tennyson was affected by Keats, and how intense was his interest in Greek subjects.

After leaving Cambridge, without graduation, Tennyson spent a few years at his father's house; at least that remained his only home for some time longer. Many of his friends visited him at

the Somersby rectory, and pleasant glimpses of their life are to be found in "In Memoriam."

O sound to rout the brood of cares,
The sweep of scythe in morning dew,
The gust that round the garden flew,
And tumbled half the mellowing pears.

O bliss, when all in circle drawn
About him, heart and ear were fed
To hear him, as he lay and read
The Tuscan poets on the lawn:

Or in the all-golden afternoon
A guest, or happy sister, sung,
Or here she brought the harp and flung
A ballad to the brightening moon.

Tennyson makes Arthur Hallam the centre of this group, and he doubtless was its bright particular star. One of his intimate associates remarks of Hallam that it was of him above all his contemporaries that great and lofty expectations were to be formed. His father said that he seemed to tread the earth as a spirit from some better world. Tennyson has also said that he was as near perfection as a mortal man can be. Hallam became engaged in marriage to Tennyson's sister.

When the poet's mother moved to Hampstead, near London, not far from 1840, that became his home. At this time he also had rooms in London, but he was obliged to live very economi-

cally, and he spent much of his time wandering about the country. We hear of him in the Isle of Wight, in Cornwall, in Surrey, or elsewhere; sometimes stopping at country hotels, sometimes living with the farmers along his way, sometimes conversing with the common people, and sometimes sitting by himself reading one of the Greek poets or an old English author. We know little of these twenty years from 1830 to 1850, almost no account of them having been given to the public. For the most part, he kept aloof from society, and he avoided public notice. When he was in London he had rooms at Lincoln's Inn Fields, and he was on intimate terms with Thackeray, Carlyle, and other literary men. He is said to have spent much of his time at a farmhouse near Maidstone, and he lived in Twickenham for a period of several years. In 1847, William Howitt, in his book on the homes and haunts of the English poets, gives this account of him: "It is very possible you may come across him in a country inn, with a foot on each hob of the fireplace, a volume of Greek in one hand, his meerschaum in the other." His literary friendships and his social tastes we may get some hint of in the lines sent him by Landor:—

I entreat you, Alfred Tennyson,
Come and share my haunch of venison.
I have, too, a bin of claret ;
Good, but better when you share it.
Tho' 'tis only a small bin,
There's a stock of it within.
And as sure as I'm a rhymer,
Half a butt of Rudesheimer.

In 1849, one who seems to have known him well gave this description of him: "It is pleasant to know that a great poet's household is among the number of his admirers. . . . Tennyson avoids general society, preferring to sit quietly with a friend, discussing the fancies that pour in his mind. He has no conversational force or brilliancy, hates arguing. . . . He is occasionally visible to his friends in London for a month or so, but to see him in his best mood you must catch him with his cigar, or under a tree lounging on the grass on a warm lazy day. . . . He is reserved in his habits, has a fine intellectual face, and is very calm and self-possessed. . . . Lately he has been rewarded by the Queen with a pension of two hundred pounds a year. . . . The pension came very opportune, he having lost most of his small patrimony in a speculation."

In Caroline Fox's Memories there are some very pleasant glimpses of him in these years. He

seems to have been a frequent visitor to Cornwall, where the Foxes lived. At one time, in his anxiety to behold the sea, he stumbled in the dark, and hurt his leg so that he was laid up for six weeks. Then his surgeon introduced the poet to his friends in the village, by whom he was kindly received, and who sent him on his way, when cured, to stop with other friends, who were keepers of little groceries and shops. At another time, a miner hid behind a stone wall to see him as he passed; for all the miners had read his poems, knowing well who he was. Again, he visited the Foxes to see some fine paintings, and to gossip with the bright young ladies there.

During ten years, after publishing his "Poems" of 1832, Tennyson was silent as a poet, except as an occasional short piece appeared in an annual or magazine. In 1842 his "Poems," in two volumes, were published, containing such portions of his former volumes as he thought worthy of preservation, together with much new work, including some of the best that he has ever done. Here for the first time appeared "Locksley Hall," "The Two Voices," "Dora," "Morte d'Arthur," and "Godiva." "The Princess" was published in 1847, and "In Memoriam" in 1850. On the

death of Wordsworth, Tennyson was made the Poet Laureate. After his marriage in 1851 he went to live on the Isle of Wight. In 1884 his name was placed on the list of English peers.

The dates in Tennyson's career are mostly those of the publication of his books. His life has not been one of events, but one of literary toil. It has not been to him a matter of first importance where he lived or what company he kept. No one could have been more thoroughly the man of letters as to his employments than Tennyson has been. He has numbered among his friends most of the great men of his day in England, with whom from time to time he delights to hold intellectual intercourse. Carlyle found him "a true human soul"; but he complained that Tennyson often "skips" him in his visits to London, "being a man solitary and sad." A lover of good company in hours of relaxation, Tennyson has found his delight in the quiet of his own haunts and in the companionship of his own thoughts. Not a man of society, he has mingled little with the fashionable world since finding a home at Freshwater.

His house at Freshwater, Isle of Wight, known as Farringford, is a modest and cheerful one, set

in the midst of gardens and beautiful trees. Mrs. Ritchie says it "seemed like a charmed palace, with green walls without, and speaking walls within. There hung Dante with his solemn nose and wreath; Italy gleamed over the doorways; friends' faces lined the way; books filled the shelves, and a glow of crimson was everywhere; the great oriel drawing-room window was full of green and golden leaves, of the sound of birds and of the distant sea." The country all about is full of beauty and delight, a fit place for a poet to ramble in. Tennyson kept up his habits of former years, and spent much of his time amidst the beauties of nature, and in lone wanderings in out-of-the-way places. His friends often gathered at Farringford, and among them came many of the most noted men of the time. Tennyson is hospitable, and delights in gathering a select company about him. In 1869 he built a house at Aldworth, near Haslemere, in Surrey. He made a change of residence partly on account of the health of his wife, and partly because Farringford had become a place too much frequented to suit the tastes of the poet. He dreads all popularity and interviewing, and desires to be out of the reach of sight-seers. He is extremely

shy and reticent, and greatly dislikes being lionized.

Tennyson is large and powerful in build; blunt and brusque in manner, and careless in his personal habits. He talks in a plain, simple manner, using Saxon words mainly. An American travelling in England saw Tennyson passing by on his daily walk, and described him as "above the middle size, with rather round shoulders, and a little stoop, a large nose, full and peaked beard, old, low, broad-brimmed black felt hat slouched over his face, long, thin, dark features, and spectacles." Visited at Farringford by Moncure D. Conway, we have another account of the poet: "Tall, of dark complexion, with a deep and blunt manner, almost Quaker-like in its plainness, he seemed to be the last person one would have picked out as the delicate and supersensitive idyllist. In conversation he never rose to anything like the heroic strain, except when speaking of England. His pride in his country amounts to a passion. He had also a keen interest in scientific subjects, concerning which he had evidently read a great deal. He spoke much of the philosophical questions of the day." In the delightful book of Memories of Caroline Fox we have a description of Tennyson

based on a long and intimate friendship, and animated with a woman's enthusiasm. "Tennyson is a grand specimen of a man," she says, "with a magnificent head, set on his shoulders like the capital of a mighty pillar. His hair is long and wavy, and covers a massive head. He wears a beard and mustache, which one begrudges as hiding so much of firm, powerful, but finely-chiselled mouth. His eyes are large and gray, and open wide when a subject interests him; they are well shaded by the noble brow, with its strong lines of thought and suffering. I can quite understand Samuel Laurence calling it the best balance of head he had ever seen."

Carlyle's description is not so enthusiastic, but far more interesting and suggestive. Its praise, coming from Carlyle, and its tone of friendly appreciation, mean much. "One of the finest looking men in the world," wrote the great cynic to Emerson. "A great shock of rough, dusky-dark hair; bright, laughing hazel eyes; massive aquiline face — most massive yet most delicate; of sallow brown complexion, almost Indian-looking; clothes cynically loose, free-and-easy; smokes infinite tobacco. His voice is musically metallic — fit for loud laughter and piercing wail, and all

that may lie between; speech and speculation free and plenteous: I do not meet, in these last decades, such company over a pipe!" A few years earlier he had written of him in this wise, after an evening's chat: "A fine, large-featured, dim-eyed, bronze-colored, shaggy-headed man is Alfred; dusty, smoky, free-and-easy, who swims outwardly and inwardly with great composure in an inarticulate element of tranquil chaos and tobacco-smoke. Great now and then when he does emerge — a most restful, brotherly, solid-hearted man." When travelling in Southern Europe, Tennyson was taken for a Frenchman or an Italian, and this agrees with Bayard Taylor's portraiture: "He is tall and broad-shouldered as a son of Anak, with hair, beard, and eyes of southern darkness."

Tennyson is too thoroughly sincere a man to give much heed to mere conventionalisms. He is said to wear a plain gray suit of clothes, which hangs loosely about him, a collar which does not fit well, and a carelessly adjusted necktie. He has the habit, so common among literary men, of smoking incessantly. His family have always been among his most ardent admirers, and he lives happily in his home. Manliness, noble pur-

pose, broad thought, generous sentiments, and liberal hopes for mankind have always characterized him.

Tennyson's personality has given its distinctive quality to his poetry. Some poets write as if they were disembodied spirits, as if they were not touched by time and circumstances; but Tennyson is the child of his age, his country, and his own experiences. His autograph is written across each of his poems. In his case it is therefore more than usually interesting and suggestive that we know something of what he has seen and felt, what culture and opportunities he has had, where he was born and how he has lived. His own life and character serve as the best commentary on his poetry.

II.

As a poet Tennyson has been both popular and great. He has almost from the first been accepted as the greatest poet of his time. In his own class, among those who are masters of melody and artistic refinement, Tennyson stands with the highest. In almost the widest sense he has been a popular poet; and he has been read by all classes and published in all forms and at all prices. Longfellow has appealed more fully than he to the heart of the world, to the common sentiments and tastes; but Tennyson is a deeper and a truer interpreter of the aspects of nature and of being, he has the artist instinct and ability in a far higher measure, and he is more melodious and musical.

Tennyson is a consummate artist in the use of words. The instinct for form, color, symmetry, and melody is very strong in him; and the art-

revival in England has found him working along much the same lines and towards results near of kin. His work in poetry has had some features in common with that of the pre-Raphaelites in painting; and he has had their love of the past in its most beautiful expressions. Under the influence of Keats he has been drawn to the later Greek poets, and those most marked by melody and beauty. Many of his earlier poems are Greek in subject and manner, so that Carlyle said of him: "There he sits on a dung-heap, surrounded by innumerable dead dogs." This saying does not prove Tennyson devoid of interest in living subjects, though it does prove Carlyle's want of sympathy with the artistic revival going on about him with such rapidity.

The most conspicuous fact about Tennyson as a poet is his wonderful command of melody and music, and his supremely artistic command over the technique of poetry. His poems are great word-pictures, and they have that perfection and harmony so dear to the artistic mind. His poems are beautiful in structure, harmonious in form, and musical in expression. In melody and rhythm Tennyson may be said to be nearly perfect. He loves to use whatever device will

heighten the musical and artistic effect of his verse. He has made use of assonance, he knows how to employ alliteration, he has enlarged the number of English metres and forms of verse, he can make use of a discord or a change of metre with excellent results, and he is not devoid of pathos and passion when they are needed. He has re-introduced many old and rich-sounding words; he has found delight in plain Saxon speech, and in the luscious joy of new-coined words, alike. He gives to many common words their old meanings, and he has a sure instinct for the aroma and the color of words.

Tennyson is essentially an artist, and he paints pictures with words. His poetry is full of scenes for the painter, clearly conceived, rightly colored, full of life, and admirably adapted to the gratification of the artistic taste. He not only feels as the poet feels, but he sees as the artist sees. Many of his early poems are like a renascence picture gallery, wherein many artists have vied with each other in richness of coloring and delicacy of drawing. His poetry is delicate, sensitive, refined, even overwrought. He is like an artisan who gives more attention to polishing than to the strong and impressive construction of

his work. The massive repose, the impression of commanding power, the original rush and daring of genius, are often less apparent than the novel outline, the pretty design, and the delicate tracery.

Tennyson's perfection in rhythm, melody, and form has not been the result of mere spontaneity. Swinburne writes his poems as a musician may sit down to a piano and pour out his feelings in sound, and with that intuitive sense of perfection in feeling and form which is impatient of revision. Tennyson secures his perfect results by careful and frequent correction. His ear for melody is so acute and accurate that he is not contented until the highest artistic perfection has been reached; and, at the same time, his desire for accuracy in thought demands the same thorough elaboration for the sake of what he is saying. All in all, no English poet has surpassed or even equalled him in the technique of the poetic art. He has given English poetry a flexibility and a range it never had before, a delicacy and perfection, and a musical compass, which were thought to be quite impossible. He has carried forward what others had begun, following Coleridge, Shelley, Byron, and Keats; but he has gained a mas-

tery over the tuneful instrument of song no other has reached. In the way of melody and a flexible command of words Swinburne has gone beyond even Tennyson, but he sacrifices strength to music and thought to words in a degree too great to make his work effective. Tennyson is an artist in all directions, keen of eye and ear, firm of hand and sound in heart, sure in instinct and perfect in workmanship, singing with the lark's freedom of impulse and yet he looks well to the manner of his song.

There is scarcely one of Tennyson's shorter poems which has not undergone revision since its first publication, and most of his longer works have been vigorously corrected more than once. "Maud" has been subjected five times to his critical reworking, coming from his hand a better poem on each occasion. The "Princess" has been submitted to nearly as many revisions, by the addition of the songs, by the fuller elaboration of the parts, by the more perfect welding of all together, and by the artistic development of the plot and purpose of the poem. His artist's eye and his poet's ear will leave nothing until they are satisfied, until crudities are refined away, and the whole made living with harmony and beauty.

In conversation with a fellow-author he spoke of his reluctance to publish his poems until they were fully completed, and of the impossibility of correcting those which have been for many years before the public. He referred especially to "Marianna" as containing a wrong line and one which annoyed him. He had written: —

> The rusted nails fell from the knots
> That hold the peach to the garden-wall.

He said this line did not describe the characteristics of the scenery he had in mind, and that the line should have been: —

> That held the *pear* to the *gable*-wall.

He has not corrected his work so assiduously merely for the sake of its technical perfection, but even more because of his love of accuracy in details and his purpose to describe things as they are. He has an exquisite sense of the fitness and the right relations of things, and an over-sensitive desire that what makes the scene before him most living and real should appear in his poetry. His knowledge of nature is varied and accurate, and his acquaintance with history and literature ample in its proportions. Thackeray once said to Bayard Taylor: "Tennyson is the wisest man I know."

He does not fill his poems with information, and is not to be ranked with the didactic poets. His expressions and allusions are sometimes too studied, however, too careful and elaborate; but his keen poetic sense will allow nothing to take its place in his poetry merely for the sake of information. He carefully works out every detail and every image, and gives to each element of his verse that proportion which accords with his artistic apprehension. He has husbanded his strength for his poetic work, and lived a life of pure devotion to his art. He has taken no part in affairs, and has concerned himself with no other interests than those of a poet. A zealous and steadfast worshipper of the muse he has ever been, and he has found in poetry the one aim and inspiration of his life. Almost alone among the English poets in this century has he written wholly in verse. He has not published in all above half a dozen pages of prose; and even these have been in the form of brief letters on special occasions, and short notes to a few poems. Unconnected with his poetry scarcely a line of prose from his pen has been given to the public. He has lived in and for poetry; and all his experiences and his

knowledge are made to farther its growth and perfection.

So widely varied has been Tennyson's knowledge that much has been written of his indebtedness to other poets and literary masters. Stedman devotes a long chapter to his relations to Theocritus, and several pages to his resemblance to Pope; and others have made elaborate attempts to trace his expressions to his predecessors. The influence of his literary tastes on his poetry is a marked one; and he doubtless has carried away many an allusion and turn of thought from the books he has read. He is a literary poet, drawing his inspiration largely from "the storied past." It is not so much contact with nature which has made him a poet, as contact with the teeming thoughts of men, as they have taken form in the art products of the world. Only in so far as his borrowings indicate the extent to which he is a literary poet are they worthy of notice. Most of them are the results of the critics' ingenuity, rather than of the actual indebtedness of the poet. The right to read must be acceded to the poet as to other men, and the right to find in the past stimulating materials for the exercise of his poetic genius.

This conceded, it at once appears that Tennyson has fully assimilated whatever he has found that would be of most service to him as a poet, and made it a living part of his poetic work. His own answer to the charge of indebtedness vindicates his methods against the objectors and the critics:—

"I do not object to your finding parallelisms. They must always recur. A man (a Chinese scholar) some time ago wrote to me saying that in an unknown, untranslated Chinese poem there were two lines of mine, almost word for word. Why not? Are not human eyes all over the world looking at the same objects, and must there not consequently be coincidences of thought and impressions and expressions? It is scarcely possible for anyone to say or write anything, in this late time of the world, to which, in the rest of the literature of the world, a parallel could not somewhere be found. But when you say that this passage or that was suggested by Wordsworth or Shelley or another, I demur, and, more, I wholly disagree. . . .

"I could multiply instances, but I will not bore you, and far indeed am I from asserting that books, as well as nature, are not, and ought not

to be suggestive to the poet. I am sure that I myself, and many others, find a peculiar charm in those passages of such great masters as Vergil or Milton where they adopt the creation of a bygone poet, and reclothe it more or less, according to their own fancy. But there is, I fear, a prosaic set growing up among us, editors of booklets, bookworms, index-makers, or men of great memories and no imagination, who *impute themselves* to the poet, and so believe that *he*, too, has no imagination, but is forever poking his nose between the pages of some old volume in order to see what he can appropriate. They will not allow one to say 'Ring the bells,' without finding that we have taken it from Sir P. Sydney, or even to use such a simple expression as the ocean 'roars' without finding out the precise verse in Homer or Horace from which we have *plagiarized* it. (Fact!)" *

* A Study of "The Princess." By S. E. Dawson. Second edition.

III.

TENNYSON has the sentiment of beauty; the vision of it ever rises before him; it subordinates all his other tendencies. It does no violence to his other gifts, but it rises above them all; it leads him by an invisible bond of delightful power it has woven about all his being. His love of beauty keeps him from being rugged and sublime in his poetry, from that majestic power and awful penetration of the high heavens of reality which we behold and feel in Dante and in Milton. Beauty is to him an entrancement; it is an Aladdin's lamp to open to his willing feet the realms of faery and of faith. His delight in beauty is no greater than his comprehension of it; he feels it and he knows it with an equal satisfaction. It does not overthrow his other powers; but it is in fine balance and harmony with them.

Tennyson is not subdued by beauty, as were Shelley and Keats, but his whole nature glows

with it, while he keeps the even poise of his being under its influence. It does not intoxicate him, but it lifts him into new regions of capacity; and it gives to his artistic work a completeness not to be seen in the poetry of any other English poet. He luxuriates in the movement and music of verse; it is to him an exquisite delight. He is in sympathy with the tendency to decoration in art, that revels in color and ornament, that takes delight in beauty because it answers to an instinctive craving in man's nature.

The poet of an artistic age, Tennyson has little resemblance to the poets of the classical period or to those of the time of revolution. Dryden loved classical forms and high-sounding expressions; Wordsworth found delight in the natural world and in what is simple; Tennyson seeks everywhere for what is lovely and beautiful. He goes not to books alone for what is polished and impressive; but also for what is exquisite and artistic. He turns not to nature alone for what is sublime with the light of God's presence; but also for what is transformable into pictures for the imagination. In a time of art-revival Tennyson is the poet to make beauty real and vital to

the hearts and imaginations of men. Never before has the English people realized the true worth of art or led Europe in its expression. That fact appears in his work as the one most characteristic of his poetry, as the one which most of all distinguishes him from his predecessors.

In his earlier poems Tennyson seemed to be dilettante in feeling and method, to be merely a delightful singer, to lack virility and a great purpose. Then his artistic tendency was not only most prominent, but it seemed to be almost the only one to which he had given himself as a poet. He painted charming, even exquisite, pictures; but he was a poet of the lovely, the romantic, and the artistic. In so far as he was not this he was a drawing-room poet, the poet of sweet young girls. The poet was there, indeed, with instrument in hand making delightful music; but the man did not appear who was to give soul and aim to the work. The soft lulling of the senses to repose and charmed delight, like the Indian summer of mellow haze and the soft blowing of winds, seems to prevail in most of the earlier poems. The dreaming ease that comes without eager desire or pushing thought is there, with a

tender regret that lapses us in a melancholy so satisfying we would never more rouse us to the real world again.

> In the afternoon they came into a land
> In which it seemed always afternoon.

To that land of the "always afternoon" Tennyson came in the morning of his days. Then he seemed to be little more than

> "The idle singer of an empty day."

Beauty seemed to have taken him captive; but in time he broke the bonds of her captivity, and he stood before her as a lover. It was then his true work as a poet began; and it was then he made beauty a mistress to inspire his heart and to guide his imagination.

The dilettante spirit soon disappeared from Tennyson. He began his poetical career at a time when the reaction from the revolutionary movement had largely spent its force, and before the new and nobler spirit of reform had taken such a character as to commend it to the poet's heart. When it did, Tennyson gave himself to it not with enthusiasm, but with something of earnestness; and he became in a limited measure the poet of that constitutional revolution which

has since taken place in England. He has represented his time in its aspirations for liberty and in its sympathies for humanity, as well as in its love of the artistic. That time is not the present, but the period from 1830 onward for thirty years, during which the reform agitation, the Oxford movement, and the renascence of art, were such potent and growing influences in English thought and life. It differed from the revolutionary period by its acceptance of the constitutional method of reform, by its widening of suffrage and the political uplifting of the working class, by the decay of absolutism, and by the greatly increased extension of education.

The overturning and rebuilding of the world in a day men no longer believe in; but they have faith in the patient correction of faults and the gradual enlargement of rights. Following his time, Tennyson could not be a revolutionist with Shelley or a democrat with Burns or a hater of the established social order with Byron. His sympathies are with an extension of suffrage, the increase of education, an expansion of woman's opportunities, and an increase of power to representative government. We do not wish him to be a Burns or a Byron, a Keats or a Coleridge,

because we do not wish a return of their time or of the spirit which gave it life. A repetition of the men or the time would not be possible, or please us if it were. We would have Tennyson as he is, because he does not repeat what has gone before, and because he offers new hopes both for poetry and life. Having had Wordsworth's love of nature and distrust of books, and retirement from the busy haunts of men, and abstract studies into the highest things of life and truth, we are now glad to have Tennyson with his music and melody, his love of beauty and want of brusqueness, his culture and complacency, his faith in tolerance and love of tradition. He is the incarnate voice of cultured and refined England in his time.

He accepts neither the revolutionary doctrines of the earlier years of the century nor the evolutionary doctrines of the present time. He believes neither in the regenerated earth which man is to secure by blotting out the past, nor in the slow evolution of a higher society by natural causes. The one increasing purpose he sees in history is the result of the united effort of God and man. A better time is surely coming in the future, "far away, not in our time," for change is

the order in all things, change which leads to progress.

> The old order changeth, yieldeth place to new,
> And God fulfils himself in many ways,
> Lest one good custom should corrupt the world.

The time of man's redemption from misery, vice, and ignorance draweth nigh slowly, because God worketh in the world's order, now and hitherto and forever.

> This fine old world of ours is but a child
> Yet in the go-cart. Patience! Give it time
> To learn its limbs; there is a hand that guides.

His poems, as a whole, show one of the most marked tendencies of his time in a large degree. His has been an age of inclusion and comprehensiveness, not intense and passionate, but generous and wide-seeing. He has written many kinds of verse, has been in sympathy with many forms of thought and life, and has taught that truth is not of party or sect. A lyric, a descriptive, and a dramatic poet, he has drawn his inspiration alike from man, nature, and tradition. Most truly a lyric poet, he has seen in man the subject of supremest interest to his mind, and in sympathy with man he has found the deepest stirrings of his emotions.

Tennyson is a lyric and idyllic poet, having the gift of song and of picturing life in its daily

aspects. His interest is in man, and in nature only as surrounding and reflecting him; and he delights in the feelings and thoughts of men in all classes and times. It is not the conflicts and the tragedies of life he is drawn to most surely by his sympathies; but the daily hopes, sorrows, and achievements of human beings. The simple and the homelike are dear to him as well as the romantic and the picturesque, though he loves the latter far better than the tragic and warlike. Even in the "Idyls of the King" it is the gentler and the moral side of chivalry he most delights in describing. He sings of the loves and the aspirations of men, their sentiments and sympathies. This tendency of his mind has dictated the form of his verse, and it has prevented his venturing far in the use of dramatic and epic poetry. His keen sense of beauty and harmony has been a sure hindrance to success in these directions. His genius works in the direction of description and not of representation. This is not to be regretted, for his singing has been truer to the aspirations and needs of the world in his time than if he had been a successful dramatist. As it is, the sentiments and emotions have found in him a true interpreter.

IV.

TENNYSON'S method of dealing with dramatic subjects may be seen in "Maud," a poem which has been often charged with obscurity. It is romantic in spirit and mono-dramatic in form, the speaker passing through successive stages of emotion and thought, in his attempts to attain personal fidelity to social truth in an age without a high ideal aim. In its latest form this poem is called "a monodrama," and it is divided into three parts, in the second of which the speaker is insane. The first part is marked by an artistic skill and perfection not surpassed in any other of Tennyson's poems, by a great variety and richness of poetic music, and by depth and purity of sentiment. Its motive is the conflict of a refined and sensitive nature with the social conditions imposed by wealth, and the overthrow of that nature from the lack of some high social and

moral aim inspiring his time, to which he can give his life with earnestness enough to overcome his regrets and his disappointment. The hero, if hero he can be called, kills the brother of Maud, flies to a foreign land, and becomes insane. In the second part he is passing through the various stages of his madness; and, as he recovers, he learns of Maud's death through grief. In the third part the hero recovers, and he finds a new hope for his country in the war spirit rousing the English to undertake the breaking of the influence of Russia. Even war is better than the spirit of greed, and war only can shake men out of their selfishness.

> And it was but a dream, yet it lighten'd my despair
> When I thought that a war would arise in defence of the right,
> That an iron tyranny now should bend or cease,
> The glory of manhood stand on his ancient height,
> Nor Britain's one sole God be the millionnaire:
> No more shall commerce be all in all, and Peace
> Pipe on her pastoral hillock a languid note.

It is a warlike note which the poet has struck in these concluding words of "Maud"; but it means a love of political earnestness and purpose rather than of bloodshed. That Tennyson saw in the commercial spirit of the time a growing disincli-

nation for manliness, justice, and truth, this poem helps us realize; and yet the main purpose of it is poetic and dramatic. Too much is not to be inferred from the words put into the mouth of the hero. A liberal in politics, Tennyson would not have liberality lead men to forget to cherish the highest social spirit and loyalty, such as is perpetuated by the cultured and aristocratic classes. If democracy leads only to huckstering trade and the greed of money, he will have none of it. To be zealous and loyal Englishmen, to keep the soul of honor and the aim of knightly purity, to think of manhood and probity first of all things; these are the thoughts which seem to gleam forth from the poetic purpose of "Maud."

As a whole, the poem is blemished by serious artistic defects, by the obscurity which disfigures it even in its latest form, by the abrupt transitions from poem to poem and part to part, by a general looseness of structure, and by a morbid feeling which pervades so much of it. Perhaps more fully than any other of his poems "Maud" betrays Tennyson's incapacity for plot and structural creative power. He is a great and noble singer; but he is not able to build a stately and symmetric edifice for his muse. His poetry is never

wanting in music and beauty; but it is beauty without an organic symmetry. As in "Maud," the parts of his poems are over-ornamented, burdened with what is delightful and joyous; but the whole poem has not that unity, and that fit jointure of part to part, and that focusing of all its impressions into one grand and all-commanding effect, which go to make the highest work of art.

The pictures of love in "Maud," and its songs of affection, its variety of metre and its richness of poetic form, its musical harmony and its glow of feeling, show Tennyson at his best. It introduces a fresh poetic style, full of sensuous beauty guided by a pure moral aim, adding artistic skill to intellectual intent. It is a plea for higher national aims, didactic in purpose to a limited extent, but most poetic and romantic in method.

The satire which Tennyson introduces into "Maud" is not worthy of his genius, though it gives variety and relief to the poem. It is sharp and scathing, but not so expressed as to have an abiding effect on those for whom it is intended. It seems a discordant note in his work; not because we do not wish to see him stirred by hate of wrong, but because it is not relieved by that capacity for laughter which appears in the great-

est poetry. Tennyson has the gift of pathos and sympathy, but not the gift of humor. His satire does not make the offender laugh at or hate himself. It is not broad, genial, and corrective. His reproofs are resented, rather than accepted with insight into their truthfulness.

The beauties and the defects of "Maud" reappear in "The Princess." It has the same high artistic perfection, secured by many revisions and a keen ear for melody, joined to a similar ethical and reformatory purpose. "The Princess" has been severely criticised for its looseness of structure, and for its combination of a mediæval setting with a radical aim. Tennyson's skill is not to be seen in his plots, imperfectly worked out, but in his descriptions of nature, his insight and fidelity in the portrayal of character, and his exquisite charm of coloring.

While "The Princess" is a plea in behalf of a higher social life for women, and greater justice for them in all their relations to men, it is far from being revolutionary, or even radical, in its attitude. Its motive is that of harmony and unity in human life, to be obtained by a perfect cooperation and a common aim on the part of man and woman.

> Till at the last she set herself to man
> Like perfect music unto noble words.

It is the purpose of the poem to teach that

> The woman's cause is man's ; they rise or sink
> Together, dwarf'd or godlike, bond or free.

This solution of the problem of woman's destiny, though that of a poet, is the best and most satisfactory yet given us, so far as it goes. It is that of the perfect equality of the sexes, built up and conserved by mutual sympathy and helpfulness. This is the theory of all men and women who are true to the facts of life and the noblest social ideals. "The Princess" presents a lofty and a noble conception of love and domestic life, especially in the brief songs which appear at each turn in the narrative. Tennyson's gift of song has attained its greatest height in this poem, so full is it of tender pathos and the music of noble passion. Here, too, he shows his descriptive powers, his heroic impulse of heart, and his sympathy with what is genuine and generous, in full tide of ample expression.

V.

THE most widely read and loved of Tennyson's poems is "In Memoriam"; and it is the one which brings him into closer sympathy with the thought of his time than any other. Monotonous in subject and structure, it manifests variety and uniqueness in treatment. It seems, at first, to be nothing more than a series of short poems, following each other without order or purpose, and having for their general subject the death of a much-loved friend, and the problem of immortality. As a personal lamentation for a loved associate it is superior to even the similar poems of Milton, Shelley, and Matthew Arnold. It is superior because more genuine and unstudied, and more expressive of real human grief. It stands first in its beauty, its intensity of personal attachment, and in its lofty sense of the worth of friendship. Yet it is not

merely a lament for Hallam or a series of short poems thrown carelessly together; though far too much effort has been made to prove a complete unity of design and thought in the poem. In a fragmentary way the poem does indicate a systematic and continuous purpose; but there is no doubt that the separate poems were written during a period of many years, and that they are the genuine expressions of feeling as it took on new forms from time to time. To think otherwise is to suppose the poet made his grief merely a means of stimulating his muse to action.

The value of "In Memoriam" lies in the fact that it is a natural interpretation of the grief of a thoughtful man, who laments his friend in a genuine manner, and then gives utterance to his thoughts and feelings at each successive stage of his recovery from his first period of sadness and doubt. The criticism, that he has made merchandise of his grief, is amply deserved if the poem has such a unity of structure as some have discovered in it. To have written such a poem as these critics describe, Tennyson must have gained a capacity for plot and harmony of structure not to be found in any other of his poems. The significance of "In Memoriam," however, is not

to be found in this direction so much as in its genuineness of feeling, and its sincere contention with the doubts suggested by the death of the poet's friend. In all probability its parts have been arranged into an orderly consideration of the problems the poet took in hand, and there is in it a gradual and rational recovery from doubt through faith. It is not to be read as a continuous poem so much as in its separate parts, when they chance to fit the moods of one's own mind. Its praise of friendship, its glowing descriptions of scenery, its delight in domestic joy and confidence, its grief at the loss of a dear companion, its doubt and questioning about the future, its large dealing with the great problems of life and thought, its attitude of faith, and its confident acceptance of God and immortality, all help to make it Tennyson's greatest poem.

"In Memoriam" reflects the mood and thought of the time as in a mirror. Its themes are the highest which can ever exercise the mind of man. It has not the depth and profoundness of the great poems of Dante and Milton; but our time is not as theirs, and Tennyson has done for us what the ponderous strength of their thought and method would have kept them from accom-

plishing. He rises through doubt to confident faith; a faith resting, not on tradition and history, but on the evidences of God's manifestation of himself in nature, and on the testimony of the soul to its own reality and worth.

This poem offers another testimony to the versatility and range of Tennyson's genius. He does not strike one key alone, or exhaust his capacity with a few chords. Always graceful, artistic, and imaginative, he ranges from the delicate claim of beauty on the poet's sensitive nature, through the questions of reform asking the attention of serious minds, on through the old traditions and flower-fields of the past, to the grandest problems of man's nature and destiny. Varied as has been his use of metre, he has been none the less so in his themes, which range from grave to gay, from a tender flower growing in a ruined wall to the nature of Him who inhabiteth eternity. That he has in this way lost something in weight and majestic power, must be said; but he has gained in persuasiveness of influence and in the penetrative tone of his thought. He does not always write as if he had a mighty theme before him; but he does speak to the men and women of his generation in a manner they can

comprehend, and which appeals earnestly to their feelings and hopes.

"In Memoriam" is a poem of actual experiences. It is an outgrowth of heart-wrestlings and tragedies. The doubts are those with which one man, at least, has contended in earnest; and the anguish which they wrung out of him is here imprinted. The theme selected itself for the poet; it is the cry of the poet's heart from hour to hour as the experiences of grief came to him. Here is the most open and face to face dealing with the problem of death which the literature of the time has given us. The poet has unveiled his heart; and he speaks to us as one who has known the universal experience. One less truly an artist would have shaped these experiences into a less perfect whole; but we must not think because an artist has been here, that a living heart did not go before him.

This is a poem of the actual and of the present. There is no glamor of tradition or of the past upon it. It is no story retold with a new setting; no myth made to live again. Whatever of merit it has is because it is the voice of a man who has felt and thought. He has felt the mystery of life and death; he has thought to unriddle the

problem of evil. It is because he speaks to us as a man and a poet that we turn to his pages for consolation and instruction. It is much to know what the man of genius and of supreme insight has felt, and to know that his experience has been as our own.

Tennyson has shown us that his theme was worthy of the poet's endeavor. There is poetry in it as well as theology, and poetry of the grandest kind. The questions of man's past and future, the meaning of life, and the cause of all things that exist are not those to which the poet is forbidden. Tennyson has seen and transcribed for us that which appeals to feeling, imagination, and the ideal. What themes could be more real, or have in them more of what is actual?

"In Memoriam" is not a didactic and theological poem. It touches on the gravest of the questions with which man has to deal, but it pronounces no opinion on them from the point of view of theology. It is the human point of view it presents, and which it keeps to throughout. The theme is dealt with in a thoughtful manner and in the spirit of free inquiry, but the sentiments on which it is based are those of universal human nature. It is a seeker for light who

appears in these pages, and one who climbs the stairs which slope through darkness up to God. It is not one who has found all truth who speaks here, but a pilgrim with wallet in hand who sets forth as an apprentice for its attainment. It is a book of confessions of what the heart has felt and striven to make its own. There is so much of human worth and depth in it that it becomes the voice of many experiences and convictions.

"In Memoriam" is a poem of sentiment more than of great thoughts and convictions. It does not probe the problem of death to the bottom, or give us a solution of life which is final. It is as a man of feeling rather than as a man of thought that Tennyson comes before us. We go to Browning for thought; we go to Tennyson for sentiment. The one is keen in analysis; the other is profound in feeling. In this poem grief has laid its hand on us, and sorrow has taken possession of us. We know what the poet has felt, for we are made to feel with him. We are burdened with his griefs, and we are tormented with his doubts.

A poet of sentiment, Tennyson never slips into sentimentalism. He keeps to a high level of purpose throughout "In Memoriam," with the aid of

serious thought and a keen conviction of the truth of what he utters. Tears he invites, and pathos he invokes; but they are subdued and undemonstrative. His sentiment is lofty and his passion is pure. He would have men feel deeply and not with wild excess. He would lead them to nobler sentiments and to hopes that are ideal. The pathos of sympathy and affection, the sentiment of heroic purpose and knightly attainment, and the feeling of trust he would bring to men as ever the need of their lives. It is not philosophy or theology or science the poet can give us, but sentiment and feeling and ideal motives.

"In Memoriam" is a poem for serious and earnest minds, for those who would see the world as it is, and yet who would walk as if in the presence of that majesty of mystery which fills earth and heaven with its subtle presence. Its spirit cleaves to one's thought, and its temper diffuses itself through one's being. There is something about it like a delicate perfume, or like the winds that gently waft themselves forward from unseen regions of far-off freshness.

It is not a book of doctrines or of theological instruction, or even a treatise on the soul's nature and destiny. It is possible that too much has

been made of its teaching, and that men have looked in it too often for confirmation of their own opinions. There is nothing in it of Pope's resolve to reconcile the ways of God to man, or of Young's exposition of the inner counsels of the Almighty. Tennyson is a poet and not a philosopher; and it is as a poet he contemplates the great events and problems of human existence. "In Memoriam" touches the questions of faith only as these appeal to the heart and imagination of the poet, as they come to him along the way of the feelings and sympathies and aspirations of men. Death, and what is beyond it, play on every chord in his soul; and the music which is thus made he sings forth for the reconcilement and encouragement of the world. He sings only because the theme of life and death is itself a deathless song of advancing life and hope.

VI.

TENNYSON has done what several English poets have thought of and purposed to accomplish. He has written a great poem on the legends of King Arthur. This was a favorite theme with Milton; and many poems have been written on the whole body of the legends. Tennyson early read Mallory's prose translation, and from time to time he produced short poems drawn from that source. When at the height of his powers as a poet, he gave to the world four of the legends; and he has since slowly completed the cycle, and welded the parts together into the greatest epic poem of the century. He dealt freely with the legends, using those alike of Welsh and of English origin, refining, purifying, and ennobling them throughout. The coarse and rude he has put aside, remaking the stories in his own artistic manner, and shaping the whole to a high ideal purpose. Largely allegorical in

their nature, these legends easily gave themselves to a free, imaginative treatment.

It cannot be said Tennyson has painted an accurate picture of the time which the legends represent, even though he believes that Arthur was a real person, and that many of the old narratives are based on genuine history. The savage strength of those times, their rough and rude and roistering manhood, blunt in manner and bloody in purpose, are not in these poems, as they come from Tennyson's hand. He has made the characters too fine, and he has given the scenes a quite ideal beauty; though we cannot regret this when we take note of the grace and nobleness, the grandeur of aim and the fine-wrought joy of high accomplishment, the faithfulness of passion to its own inclinations, and the truthfulness of sin to its own sure calamity, with which the poem abounds.

There was but one way of giving the old legends a genuine poetic beauty in modern dress, and but one consistent with Tennyson's artistic manner; and that was to work in the line of the legends themselves, and to represent Arthur as the ideal knight and hero. Tennyson has made him the type of the heroic struggles of the soul towards

perfect purity. The higher nature in man appears in this poem under the allegorical guise of the King; and his mysterious birth, his struggles and adventures, as well as his mystical passing away, are intended to represent the conflicts of the soul with the corruptions and evils of the world. This allegorical purpose has not been wrought out in that perfect manner we see in the "Pilgrim's Progress" of Bunyan, because we lose sight of the fact that it is an allegory.

It may be that an allegorical aim was not in the original purpose of the series of poems now brought together in one great work; and surely this aim is not distinct and assertive enough to bear the richest fruits which were possible to such a purpose. The successive poems, however, do picture the advancing year in its various stages of growth, from earliest spring to the coming winter. A corresponding moral progress goes on in the poem as a whole, from the coming of Arthur in the nobleness of youth, the gathering together of the goodly fellowship of the knights of the Round Table, on to the gradual encroachments of sin, and the setting of Arthur's life in wintry darkness. This allegorical aim Tennyson has clearly stated in his poetic address "To the

Queen," which was the dedication to one series of the poems, when he speaks of

> this old imperfect tale,
> New-old, and shadowing Sense at war with Soul
> Rather than that gray king, whose name, a ghost,
> Streams like a cloud, man-shaped, from mountain peak,
> And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still; or him
> Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleor's, one
> Touched by the adulterous finger of a time
> That hover'd between war and wantonness
> And crownings and dethronements.

The "Idyls of the King" are full of fascination and of strong poetic work. They glow and burn with imagination, they speak the deepest truths of human experience. The daintiest touches are on them here and there; but anon they are mighty in purpose and awful in the reality of moral power. Passion and pathos, satire and moral teaching, are alike here; but fused into a glowing whole with fancy and imagination, ideal grace and divine truth. More than elsewhere, in this poem he has shown his love of idealism, and his desire to look at the heart of things rather than at their surface. Truth is not all outward and sensuous, not all enclosed in what can be measured and defined. The highest and truest and most real of all things are those for which science is too shallow and crude. When truth is

sublimest, and life most perfect, imagination can but hint the manner of its comprehension. Here logic and reason do not wholly avail, for reality discloses itself only to the life which sees in vision and feels in responsive intuition. The real is not that which we touch and analyze, but that which we are, and that which calls on us with a voice from a star-crowned height. Let our poet be true to soul rather than sense, to the ideal rather than the actual. We were not born to be content with what is, but to win for humanity the "ought to be" which awaits us.

Tennyson has shown in the "Idyls" his profound love of the ideal knighthood of purity and truth. They glow with a romantic passion for manly courtesy, a tender sympathy and reverence for women, and a heroic sense of fellowship with other men in all their true endeavors. This is no masquerade of imaginative or abstract personages; but a procession of men who have wrought daringly strong work as best they could, on the side of what is manly, and of women who have loved with pure ardor of heart-flame burning up through natures warm and gracious. As they go by it is a goodly company we look on, motley with virtue and sin, but fair to behold in their beauty and strength.

Perhaps nowhere more clearly than in the "Idyls" does Tennyson reveal himself as the artist and as one who has great love of the idyllic and picturesque side of life. The life of rugged strength, which was that of the time of the Arthur legends, he does not find attractive, and will not accept as worthy of a place in his poem. In much the same way he deals in his other poems with the social problems of modern life. That in the life of to-day which looks grim and ugly, because of the elements in it of birth-struggle and of search for new paths for the soul's march, he cannot appreciate at its full worth. There is that in the past, of feeling and of romance, which as a poet he cannot but delight in. This it is in the legends of King Arthur which causes them to lay hold of his imagination, and which has led him to find in them a true allegory of the soul. Arthur is an unreal person in the "Idyls," not a being of life and blood; and this element of unreality pervades the whole work. The poem does not conceive of life in its most earnest and insistent phases of expression. It is the work of an artist, and not the work of one who has probed the secret of life to its uttermost.

VII.

TENNYSON undoubtedly stands at the head of English lyrical and idyllic poets; and it is in his shorter poems of love and passion that he is to be seen at his best. No one of his longer poems stands out in conspicuous eminence, so as to take its place by the side of Milton's "Paradise Lost" or Shakespeare's "Hamlet"; but his work as a whole, even in the earlier and the shorter poems, is on a high level of beauty and genius. If his poetry has not the grandeur of motive, the sublimity of conception, and the daring splendor of execution to be found in that of the great world-poets, the mighty masters of song, who defy the limits of nation, language, and creed by their genius, he has the plainer and simpler and more popular gift which makes him the poet of the daily life of his people.

The actual England of to-day finds in Tennyson, more than in any other of its poets, a genu-

ine reflection and interpretation of its being and thought. It is this sympathy with life as he has known it, in all classes of English society, which gives to Tennyson's poetry its genuine merit in no small degree. He does not act as the voice and interpreter of a class, as Burns did. It is the English people as a nation he speaks for, whose life is the burden of his song, and whose hopes guide and inspire him. England triumphant by land and sea, pushing its enterprise into all quarters of the globe, growing in hope and solid comfort, becoming more refined, tasteful, and intelligent; it is this England of peace, prosperity, and reform he has found himself in sympathy with, and which finds in his poetry the sentiments and sympathies for which it craves.

More than Browning, Swinburne, Wordsworth, Byron, or Shelley is Tennyson read and admired by all classes of men. He does not represent a class, a sect in religion or art, a tendency in thought and sentiment, or a social type and movement. However strong his love of music and beauty and cultured refinement, he is not the poet of the artistic school. It is to Rossetti, and not to Tennyson, we are to look for the poet of the art-revival. The renascence, the Broad Church move-

ment, the advancing triumphs of science, the reform agitation, and the growth of the representative principle in government, may all find expression in Tennyson's poetry; but it as a lover of man, and as a poetic student of life in its endless variety of manifestations, that he comes to us with his appeal to heart and mind.

Tennyson sings of the loves and hopes and sorrows and burdens of men. There is pathos and there is tenderness in his poetry; the passion and energy of a strong man, and the sympathy of one who loves his fellows. He delights to wander along the English hedge-rows and rivers, and to watch the ocean from sandy shore or high cliff. Not the less he delights in the simple duties and experiences and sentiments of men in cot and hall, city mansion or lone farmhouse. Mountain and brook, tiny moss in some sequestered nook, or bird sweeping o'erhead in airy mazes of movement, alike engage his thought and inspire his song. He sings of "Enoch Arden" and "The Lord of Burleigh," "The Miller's Daughter," and the fair women of his dream, with sympathy for each alike; not because of his class or rank, but because of his humanity and his life-experiences. Lyric passion and freedom, idyllic peace

and beauty, he most of all finds it in his heart to sing of in tender lay or stately poem. He is the poet of life and hope, who knows it is life and not death for which the men of his time are panting with eager aspiration.

The poetry of Tennyson may well remind us that the world is always hungry for sentiment. There are those who are ready to sneer at what they call "sentimentalism"; but it is in the region of sentiment that most people pass the greater part of their lives. It is not possible for us all to be learned and wise. It is not possible, either, that we should have no other mental diet than common sense and reason. So long as man is man, so long as he is a being of feeling, will he love sentiment and crave for it. The poet, preacher, or novelist who can go to the heart is sure to be sought after. He will give satisfaction and comfort where much wiser men fail.

Men live in their feelings, sentiments, and sympathies much more than in logic and reason. It is well that they should, for it is feeling which makes man's world what it is. Much as we believe in the hard and dry facts of life, we are continually crying out for what is beautiful and poetic in it. A great sentiment makes the whole

world kin. In it power dwells which all right reasoning the world has known cannot equal. Sentiment gives color and freshness to life, lifts it out of the routine and humdrum of daily toil, and gives to it joy and delight.

False sentiment has the sting of evil in it. There is weakness and degradation in its influence. It entraps men for the moment, glitters for the hour, and is then forever forgotten. True sentiment lasts as long as men feel and love. It is as fresh and inspiring after a thousand years as on the day it was first uttered.

The poet speaks to an eternal need of the human soul, and because he utters the sentiments and feelings of the heart. It is that man who reflects the feelings which are universal in human nature, which rest on a common experience, who gains the suffrages of the world in all ages. He is not the great statesman or the great thinker, but the man of a great heart. He is the man who feels deeply and widely, and who knows the throb of the heart in every man about him. We love the man of feeling, whatever his faults. If he can give the world noble and pure sentiments, it will admire him and follow wherever he may lead. It is a great and lofty sentiment the world ever craves.

In a few of his poems Tennyson has shown his sympathy with the life of the past, a sympathy wholly artistic and literary. Among these are "Ænone," "The Lotos-Eaters," "Ulysses," "Tithonus," and a few others; poems which indicate his appreciation of what was best in Greek literature and legend. Not in any vital sense has his poetry been devoted to a revival of the Greek spirit, as may be said of so much of that of Keats and Matthew Arnold. In so far as he has used the classic legends and life has he given them a modern tone. The men and heroes to whom his muse turns have that in them which gives

> One equal temper of heroic hearts,
> Made weak by time and fate, but strong in will
> To strive, to seek, to find, and not to yield.

This is the modern and not the ancient temper of the heroic; and it is seen in Tennyson's mediæval poems as well. That he can transport himself into other times, or the spirit of other times into his modern poetry, we have ample proof of in his "St. Simeon Stylites" and his "Godiva." This is even better shown, in its dramatic aspects, in "The May Queen," "The Northern Farmer," and "The Northern Cobbler." Such poems as these indicate a capacity in Tennyson for sympa-

thy with human nature in its simplest aspects of joy and grief; but they are few in number. He is not the poet of sorrow, pain, and sin in the manner of Mrs. Browning. He looks at the joy, as she looked at the woe of life. He sings of rural peace and home-keeping delights, as she sang of the burdens which rest on the weak and ignorant. It is a beggar-maid crowned by a king we find in Tennyson's poetry; it is the cry of the hungry and orphaned children we find in Mrs. Browning's.

Most characteristic of Tennyson are his shorter poems of love. In "The Miller's Daughter," "Dora," "Edwin Morris," "Enoch Arden, "Aylmer's Field," and "Sea Dreams" we see him, not at his best, but in a manner most of all necessary to the knowing of him as a poet. In these poems are to be discovered the foundation elements of his genius. They are lyrics of daily life; not crude and homely, but simple, lovely, and refined. Even in "The May Queen" life is picturesque and beautiful. The rude, coarse, and brutal are put aside, as if they did not exist. It is not an earth without sin on which Tennyson lives, but it is one whereon men have learned the decencies and the dignities of life.

To these more simple and idyllic poems the great body of Tennyson's readers will come, because they are noble and hopeful, and because they strike the keynote of how many experiences!

More distinctly than any other Tennyson has been the patriotic poet of England in his time. His "Charge of the Light Brigade," "Ode to Wellington," "The Third of February, 1852," and other patriotic poems, tell how ardent his sympathy with English institutions and ideas. The triumphs of his countrymen by him have been sung in a manner to satisfy the national zeal of the most enthusiastic. At times even he can speak with a voice of terrible meaning in rebuke and in scorn of the tyrant's sway. The English hate of the Buonapartes and their methods has been his own.

> We love not this French God, the child of Hell,
> Wild War, who breaks the converse of the wise;
> But though we love kind Peace so well,
> We dare not ev'n by silence sanction lies.
> It might be safe our censure to withdraw;
> And yet, my Lords, not well: there is a higher law.

Battle for the right, and in the name of a more righteous obedience to the higher law, Tennyson has been ready to praise and to make glorious by his song. When roused by some great deed, or

when fired by hatred of some giant wrong, he has made his verse like the tramp of armies and the sound of many cannon. A lover of peace, a righteous cause appeals to all that is manly and heroic in his nature.

Tennyson may be regarded as an idyllic rather than a lyrical poet. He is the poet of a time of profound peace. In "Locksley Hall" and in "Maud" he is full of energy and passion, and the lyric quality of his mind manifests itself with spirit and force. It is not his habit, however, to give unrestrained play to sentiment and passion, to the tragedy and stormy conflict of the emotions. On the other hand, he is not a poet of reflection only, and of a merely intellectual interpretation of life. He combines the two in a very effective manner, adding to his contemplative habit of mind a rare wealth of sentiment and emotion. It is the peaceful life of his own time he has surcharged with feeling, as in "Maud" "In Memoriam," "The Princess," "Locksley Hall," "Enoch Arden," and many of his shorter poems.

Into the region of the romantic he has ventured, in the "Idyls of the King," "The Princess," and some of his shorter pieces. There he

shows himself capable of feeling and passion, but they are held in check and guided to ends acceptable to the poet's artistic and intellectual cast of thought. More of passion and of tragic insight would have made these poems greater and nobler. They are now open to the charge of being sometimes tame and unheroic. If they had a little more of vigor, stern purpose, and the courage of high resolve, they would be more worthy of our love and the poet's genius.

When we seek the chief characteristic of Tennyson we find it in his lines, —

> 'Tis life whereof our nerves are scant,
> More life and fuller that we want.

Not theories, not creeds, not forms of government, has he sought as a man and a poet; but to realize life in some larger and diviner fashion, and to make it one with all that is beautiful, true, and good. He is the poet of manly joy, and of a vigorous sense of the worth of life. It is life on earth and among men he delights in; its sentiments, aspirations, and affections are those which win the suffrages of his thought. The life of this present time he would make greater in thought, fresher in spirit, nobler in aim; and he would bring to it the motives of an ideal faith in

humanity. Man, in all the round of his human experiences, is the theme of his verse; a theme often handled on the level of each day's most urgent need for hope, courage, and love. Life is to him full of infinite riches; and of these he he has gathered such as he felt would best serve the ends of his own being and the good of the world.

VIII.

It was well that Tennyson should change the direction of his poetic expression with the coming of age. A change in manner gives freshness and a new incentive; at least, they keep the poet from the evils of repetition and stagnation. The necessity of coping with new conditions leads to a fresh putting forth of power, and to the using of other capacities than those hitherto employed. A long continued use of any one method of expression generates careless habits and a want of fresh purpose. The pleasure of novelty comes with the use of new poetic forms, and the mind is stimulated by the unaccustomed conditions under which it is employed.

Before the writing of "Queen Mary" Tennyson had not made use of the drama. Some trace of dramatic capacity his poetry had shown, and a few of his more attentive critics had predicted

that he would in time turn to this method of expression. In "Maud," "Locksley Hall," and other poems, he had made effective use of the monodrama, but always as a means of unfolding character. Depicting the moods of an individual is very different from exhibiting the conflicts which grow out of the social and political life of man. There was in "Maud" so evident a lack of unity and harmonious development of purpose, that it did not give promise of a high order of dramatic talent in the author. In "The Idyls of the King" there is the same defect and limitation. The several poems have many exquisite beauties of scenery, character, and story-telling; but they are wanting in concentration of aim, and in the power of making a single definite impression. They move on in a manner large, loose, and languid; spreading over wide tracts of waste land, instead of being confined to a single definite channel, where the waters rush forward swift and strong.

Tennyson's dramatic poems have not been received with general favor. They have been a disappointment to his admirers, and they have, as yet, added little to his poetic fame. They make it manifest that by nature he is not a

dramatic poet. They lack unity and harmony of structure. The story told has no focal point, where it is brought to a powerful and effective culmination. His dramatic works are pictorial historic studies, and not true dramas. He has followed Plutarch, Boccaccio, Froude, and Freeman far too closely, not transforming his materials in the alembic of his own genius. "Harold," "Queen Mary," and "Becket," are too much in the nature of chronicle plays or dramatic reproductions of history.

There are fine passages in the dramas, dainty touches too many, wise studies of character quite enough. In fact, Tennyson is too much the poet of refinement and exquisite taste for the production of genuine dramatic work. He has not the strength, the power of grasping tragic conditions, and the intense sympathy with the struggles and conflicts of men, necessary to the production of genuine dramas. The conflict which makes a true drama, the clashing of antagonistic natures and social conditions, is wanting in each of his works of this kind.

Tennyson is not a true dramatic poet, because he has the limitations of his day and generation. The drama demands a time of conflict and of

mental concentration. Introspection, and a keen interest in the personal unfoldment of character, are unfavorable to its production. Tennyson belongs to a time which considers the individual in his relations to God, and as a self-willing soul. That temper of mind is fatal to the drama. The dramatic element in life comes of man's being the victim of conditions he cannot control, the puppet of mighty physical and social forces. Æschylus, Calderon, Shakspere were believers in fate, the supreme will of God, and the inevitable destiny of social conditions. Tennyson's belief in law is not helpful to him as a dramatic poet. It is the blind and smiting enmity of gods or nature, unthinking and hateful, not to be predicted or avoided, in which the tragic element of the greatest dramas is to be found. If the causes of conflict were not the same to Shakspere as to Æschylus, they were sufficiently fateful and portentous to both. Shakspere lived in a time which pressed home on his mind a clear conception of the conflicts of nation with nation, social order with social order, man with nature and humanity with the Eternal Fact of things. To Tennyson no such experience of the struggle of will with force has ever come. It is the beauty,

the delight, and the harmony of life which he has seen and felt most deeply; and in these there is nothing tragic or dramatic. His eyes are turned towards the gains of man through the long centuries of his effort, as they now appear perfected and glorified in the higher civilization of the race.

He is a romantic and not a dramatic poet. It is as the interpreter of history he appears in his dramatic works, as one keenly sensitive to what there is in it beautiful and picturesque. He looks not to the struggle of civilization with civilization, and of powerful minds with adverse conditions of nature and society; but to what is romantic, spectacular, and of panoramic beauty. The clash of fate, the dire inevitableness of predestined destruction, are in none of his dramas. He is too much an optimist to see that life reveals them.

That which has made Tennyson a romantic and idyllic poet unfits him for the writing of tragedies. His genius is too dainty and too refined for the rude force and concentrated might of the drama. He cares too much for verbal felicities and delicacy of expression. His imagination is a charming maiden of high degree, and not the robust dame who meets the world face to face.

All this fits him to be a romantic poet, to enter into what is finest and noblest in past ages, and to make it live again before us in its beauty and its romance. He is the poet of tournaments, and of fair ladies attended by their knights; but not the poet of battle and of kingdoms lost and won. He is a troubadour, and not a master-singer. Ladies' bowers await him, and not the council-chambers of kings. He follows in the train of the lyric and not of the tragic muse. He has only borrowed the mask of the tragedian for a moment, to see if it will fit him at all. That he has kept it beyond the moment may have been only because there were none worthy to whom it might be returned. To him the mask does not belong, however motley the followers of the muse now may be.

IX.

TENNYSON has not been a believer in art for art's sake, or he would not have been so great a poet as he is. A master of the poetic art in its highest reaches and capacities, he has not been contented with mere beauty of form; but he has wedded thought to form and virtue to beauty. He has given the strength of moral purpose and the excellence of wisdom to his poetry. Thus is his art redeemed from weakness, and his poetry made more genuinely beautiful. The greatest master of the poetic art in England during his time, with a supreme love of beauty and artistic perfection, he has not given his whole mind and heart to this one tendency. Nowhere has he violated the moral sanctities in his singing, or cast a slur on what is pure and good. A moral aim has made itself apparent in his poetry; of such a kind as to show that he recognizes the unity of the

human faculties, and that no one of them can be divorced from the others, even in art. Beauty goes with righteousness, rather than apart from it. The poet gains nothing by passion and lust and a free rein to the senses. A violated human nature, either in the direction of excess or asceticism, is never beautiful. Tennyson has well proven to us that art may go hand in hand with conscience and moral health.

More completely than any other poet of his time he has hit the true mean between the methods of the artist and the moralist. He sings for the pure love of song, he delights in beauty for its own sake; and yet he ever keeps clearly before him, in all his more elaborate work, the moral purpose which pervades nature and life throughout. Life is lovely and moral at one and the same time; and nature is no more intent on beauty than on ethical fidelity. There is a purity of beauty as much as there is a beauty of holiness. This Tennyson has seen with a wise comprehensiveness, unifying the two spheres of art and morals, so that the old divorce between them has resulted in wedded affection and mutual joy.

It is evident that Tennyson has not made it a special purpose to teach morality; but he has

throughout his work recognized the value of the moral aim and motive. In such poems as "The Lotos-Eaters," "The Palace of Art," "Godiva," and "The Idyls of the King," there is a distinct moral element, of great importance to the apprehension of his art. Not teaching any formal and didactic precepts, he gives to his poetry a moral tone. Its influence may not be of that strenuous and insistent kind which the highest purity and manhood demand; but it never disguises lust and evil passion under the name of beauty or art.

In "The Palace of Art" Tennyson showed how fully he recognized, at the beginning of his career as a poet, the failure of art when pursued without a moral and an altruistic purpose. The lordly pleasure-house brought only evil and moral corruption to the selfish seeker for personal enjoyment. Phantasms and nightmares pursued the soul wrapped wholly in her own love of beauty and artistic pleasure. The lesson conveyed in this poem is one of profound importance; and it may be taken as Tennyson's declaration of faith on the subject of art. The soul wholly intent on the artistic interpretation of life is made to realize that life is other than beauty and its enjoyment.

Lest she should fail and perish utterly,
God, before whom ever lie bare
The abysmal deeps of Personality,
Plagued her with sore despair.

When she would think, where'er she turn'd her sight
The airy hand confusion wrought,
Wrote, "Mene, mene," and divided quite
The kingdom of her thought.

Deep dread and loathing of her solitude
Fell on her, from which mood was born
Scorn of herself; again, from out that mood
Laughter at her self-scorn.

The problem of life pressed on the soul, and she grew more and more to feel the need of human sympathy and communion. Though awake to this need, she refused to come out into the light. This state of the positive acceptance of beauty, when the moral nature had been partially aroused, is described in words robust and earnest: —

Back on herself her serpent pride had curl'd.
"No voice," she shriek'd in that lone hall,
"No voice breaks thro' the stillness of this world:
One deep, deep silence all!"

She, mouldering with the dull earth's mouldering sod,
Inwrapt tenfold in slothful shame,
Lay there exiled from eternal God,
Lost to her place and name;

And death and life she hated equally,
And nothing saw, for her despair,
But dreadful time, dreadful eternity,
No comfort anywhere;

Remaining utterly confused with fears,
And ever worse with growing time,
And ever unrelieved with dismal tears,
And all alone in crime;

Shut up as in a crumbling tomb, girt round
With blackness as a solid wall,
Far off she seem'd to hear the dully sound
Of human footsteps fall.

But the soul at last sees her sins, comes out among men, and finds the communion with them through which alone can art be made noble and life joyous.

So when four years were wholly finished,
She threw her royal robes away.
"Make me a cottage in the vale," she cried,
"Where I may mourn and pray.

"Yet pull not down my palace towers, that are
So lightly, beautifully built:
Perchance I may return with others there
When I have purged my guilt!"

In "The Vision of Sin" the poet shows the degradation which comes of submission to sense and pleasure. The poet is here represented as a youth riding a horse with wings; but he seeks the palace of pleasure, and is led in by the child of sin. At the last, he comes to be a gray and gap-toothed old man, whose sin has overcome him, and whose end is full of bitterness. Above his

sin and his degradation God waits as a moral judgment and a vision of eternal righteousness.

> I saw that every morning, far withdrawn
> Beyond the darkness and the cataract,
> God made himself an awful rose of dawn,
> Unheeded.

It is impossible to divorce beauty from that with which it is connected; and we must always understand it in its relations to that which it helps to interpret. Nor is it possible to separate the effect of beauty on man from the other elements of the impression which the world makes on him. He is a thinking and feeling being; not a congeries of faculties, each of which may act independently of the others. It is impossible for him to direct any one of his faculties to any one order of objective facts, and not to have either confused by that which surrounds it. Man's faculty for beauty will get complicated with what reason or conscience may have to say on the same subject. In the same way, it is impossible to comprehend the beauty of an object apart from its history, its science, its general environment, and its applications to the other needs of man. It is, therefore, not to be supposed that æsthetic truth is to be attained without regard to anything else. The

very attempt to find in art something complete in itself is an outrage on truth and beauty alike. It is an emasculated mind which gives sanction to such an attempt; a mind in which every other gift with which man is endowed is in some degree repressed.

True art is the outgrowth of the totality of man's being, concentrated, for the time of its production, on the sentiment and faculty of beauty. The greater the man, the fuller and the more perfect his range of being, the worthier and the truer will be his art. As an outgrowth of the activity of the whole man, art must bear the impression of man's nature from its lowest to its highest quality and capacity. Under the guidance of the æsthetic faculties, it must bear the stamp of reason, conscience, and affection; if it does not, it is imperfect, and in some degree unworthy. Those forms of art which show only a passion for beauty, with a studied effort at the repression of everything else, are inevitably weak in power and debilitating in their effect on the mind.

Tennyson has an artistic mind; the æsthetic side of life constantly appeals to him. Yet he has not divorced beauty from truth and right.

He has lived as a man, not merely as an artist. It is the whole man which speaks in his poetry, cultured in all his faculties and capacities. It is a living soul that meets us on his pages, who has thought and felt and wrestled with evil in a way to touch the needs and experiences of all, as he presents to us what life has taught him of its deepest secrets. The poet should be capable of interpreting the whole of life, from the side of emotion and imagination. This Tennyson has done in a manner to attract all classes of men in their varied experiences. Some love his charming pictures of simple and homely life; others delight in his artistic interpretations of the past; and yet others are drawn to him for his thoughtful dealings with the great problems of being. A few comprehend the balance and amplitude of his nature, as shown in the richness and variety and wholeness of his work.

Supremely an artist, Tennyson fully realizes that beauty cannot be divorced from duty. The æsthetic man is also quite as much a moral man, if he does no violence to his nature. Imagination need not quarrel with conscience, much less put it in prison. Not in any sense a didactic poet, Tennyson has inculcated many a moral lesson in

his poetry. Through all his poetry a strong and earnest moral purpose is to be seen expressing itself. It is never intrusive, it never subverts the art; but there it is with its sublime attitude of conviction. The poet may realize, as others do, that the world is founded in what is right, and that there is something noble in being on its side against wrong. This attitude of confidence in the moral order and rectitude of the world Tennyson always takes; and it gives a profound meaning and beauty to his poetry. It gives to the artist's work ampler proportions, a more perfect harmony, and a strong leading voice to the music of his singing.

X.

A SUPREMELY artistic love of beauty, combined with a rare philosophic depth of thought, characterizes Tennyson as a poet. His art is not to be studied apart from his thought. The true poet has much to teach; and we value his work in proportion to his ability to understand and interpret life and nature. If insight and intuition are wanting, if there is not present a thoughtful look at the great mysteries of human existence, poetry of the highest kind cannot be produced. As Dante spoke the largest and wisest thought of his time, and may be taken as a symbol of its spirit and aspirations, and Goethe of his, so may Tennyson be regarded as in some smaller measure the voice of his age in its deepest and truest spirit.

In his philosophic and religious tendencies Tennyson represents the idealistic movement, begun in Germany in the eighteenth century, in

its later and English phases. He is not very near to Kant, Hegel, or Coleridge; but he shows close affinity with men who learned what they taught of Coleridge and his German predecessors. He teaches idealism as tempered by science; but he does not accept science in its later and more agnostic phases. He has much to say of law and progress, but always with an idealistic interpretation. When he sings, at the end of "In Memoriam," of

> One God, one law, one element,
> And one far-off divine event,
> To which the whole creation moves,

he is not thinking of an evolution such as that described by Darwin and Spencer, but of one arising from a spiritual cause and a directive purpose. In "Locksley Hall" he presents the idealistic theory of development, caused by God's immanence in nature and humanity, not the scientific theory of evolution by natural selection and other physical causes. This evolution is slowly going forward to-day in every phase of nature and life, for God is continually at work in the natural and moral order of the world.

Tennyson finds great satisfaction in the idea of progress, and it enters as an element into many

of his poems. "Locksley Hall" gives it a most perfect interpretation; but it is in "The Princess," "The Golden Year," "The Two Voices," and, in its negative form, in "The Vision of Sin." Growth under the conditions of law, Tennyson sees everywhere; and the progress that will in the remote future make real that which the poet now sees in the ideal. The slowness of this advancement of the world is a kind of Nemesis in some of his poems. He expects no radical overturning of the world, such as Shelley believed in; and to ardent natures this snail-pace of progress is a cause of chafing and sadness. Tennyson is contented with the slow advance which comes of growth through conditions of law, because his mind rests satisfied with the law itself as the basis of human good. To him the modern conception of law has become familiar, and the miraculous has ceased to be satisfactory.

Tennyson is an idealist in the trend of his thought, but he is a realist in the accuracy of his descriptive instinct. He sees not only the outward forms of things, but their inner life. Beauty delights him; and the soul's vision consoles him. He beholds beauty as transfused with

a spiritual meaning. It is not of the senses and the surface of things alone, but one with their higher meaning and spirit. Because nature and life are transfused with God, and his advancing life, beauty exists.

Perhaps Tennyson's idealism is to be seen nowhere so clearly as in his thoughts about God. In one of the finest of his short poems he has given an admirable summary of the idealistic conception of the immanence of God in all things that are, even in a flower growing in the cranny of a wall. This theory is, that God is intimately present in every thing and in every life. The same thought, of God as the force, law, life, and mind in all things, is to be seen in the poem entitled "The Higher Pantheism"; which is, in fact, a true presentation of the teaching of idealism.

The sun, the moon, the stars, the seas, the hills and the plains —
Are not these, O Soul, the Vision of Him who reigns?

Man can see only the outward, material fact; but if he could comprehend the real meaning of this vision nature spreads out before him, he would find that it brings God before him in reality.

And the ear of man cannot hear, and the eye of man cannot see;
But if we could see and hear, this Vision — were it not He?

He does not see in God an arbitrary Being, who works through supernatural agencies; but a Being of transcendent purpose and will, who accomplishes his results through law and order. He works in nature, not by its subversion. He teaches by progress, not by miracle. In this conception of God, in his relations to humanity, law plays an important part. Tennyson does not regard law as an arbitrary dominion of force over matter or as an order in the succession of phenomena; but as the constant activities of the Infinite God, as he expresses himself through the world which he sustains by his own life and being. God is the life that throbs

> Thro' all this changing world of changeless law.

In two of his later poems Tennyson has attempted to give voice to his conception of the spiritual order which God has made within the material, and of which he is the life and light. Man comes, he says,

> From that true world within the world we see,
> Whereof our world is but the bounding shore.

In "The Human Cry" he has given the same thought a higher expression, though the poetry stumbles and fails with the largeness of the thought to be uttered.

We feel we are nothing — for all is Thou and in Thee;
We feel we are something — *that* also has come from Thee;
We know we are nothing — but Thou wilt help us to be.

Idealism could not find better words with which to express its thought of the relations of man to God. Nor could it well find truer words for its utterance of the spiritual conception of God which it entertains than the phrases of the same poem.

Infinite Ideality!
Immeasurable Reality!
Infinite Personality!

Tennyson is far from being a pantheist, however, as may be easily discovered in some of his other poems. Decisively indicative of the temper and direction of his mind is the introductory poem of "In Memoriam": —

Thine are these orbs of light and shade;
Thou madest life in man and brute:
. . . . .
Thou seemest human and divine
The highest, holiest manhood, thou.

He has many times made use of phrases which would indicate his distinct acceptance of the doctrine of the personality of God. No pantheist could make use of words so explicit as these: —

Eternal form shall still divide
The eternal soul from all beside;
And I shall know him when we meet.

The relations of man to God are grandly conceived when, in the same poem, he uses words assertive of his faith in immortality. The personality of God and man's immortality are cognate beliefs, and are mutually sustained. The two stand or fall together, and they affirm each other with a force which no logic can break. When we state the one we necessarily state the other, for they are as the two sides of the same shield. If God is a personal being, pure, just, and good, the immortality of man follows as daylight the rising of the sun. It is on this ground that Tennyson rests his own faith; and he could not take that which is stronger or more positive.

Thou will not leave us in the dust:
Thou madest man, he knows not why;
He thinks he was not made to die;
And thou hast made him: thou art just.

Again and again does the poet declare how futile and unworthy is our life if man is not immortal. He says life is as futile as it is frail, if it is to end with the body. This conviction he has expressed with great energy in the thirty-fourth poem of "In Memoriam": —

My own dim life should teach me this,
That life shall live forevermore,
Else earth is darkness at the core,
And dust and ashes all that is;

This round of green, this orb of flame,
Fantastic beauty; such as lurks
In some wild poet, when he works
Without a conscience or an aim.

What then were God to such as I?
'Twere hardly worth my while to choose
Of things all mortal, or to use
A little patience ere I die;

'Twere best at once to sink to peace,
Like birds the charming serpent draws,
To drop head-foremost in the jaws
Of vacant darkness, and to cease.

No words could be more emphatic than these of the poet's mood, or more clearly indicative of his belief that immortality is essential to the thought of God and a rational interpretation of the universe. That life and nature lose their grandest meaning without the conception of man as a being in whom immortality inheres, there can be no doubt, though George Eliot believed that such a belief is not necessary to the noblest and purest living. Tennyson places himself on the side of the universal instincts of man as a moral being; and he insists that the universe must

have a rational solution, a solution not to be had in the largest sense apart from the immortality of man. It is not selfishness which causes the purest and most aspiring souls to entertain this belief; but the conviction that the universe rests on an eternal basis of truth and goodness.

> If the wages of virtue be dust,
> Would she have heart to endure for the life of the worm and the fly?
> She desires no isles of the blest, no quiet seats of the just,
> To rest in a golden grove, or to bask in a summer sky:
> Give her the wages of going on, and not to die.

On many of the great subjects of thought and speculation which have most exercised the minds of men during the last fifty years Tennyson has uttered the most graceful and pregnant words of wisdom. Many of the finest and most expressive sayings which embody the ideas and ideals of the time, and which have passed into proverbial use have come from him. The preacher, the orator, and the writer find frequent occasion for quoting his words, because they seem to say so completely and impressively what many people are thinking.

Tennyson's religious ideas are marked by largeness and vagueness, a comprehensive spirit, and a slight tendency to mysticism. He shows breadth and generous sentiment, a great love of humanity,

and an acceptance of all nature as pervaded with the divine. Doctrines have little value for him; they are but the transitory receptacles of thought. The tendency of the age to look upon all creeds as but temporary and imperfect has found its fittest expression in the proem of "In Memoriam": —

> Our little systems have their day;
> They have their day and cease to be.
> They are but broken lights of thee,
> And thou, O Lord, art more than they.

Our creeds have their passing day; but they are only broken lights of Him who does not change. Even doubt which is honest may be a help towards the truth; and it may be worthier than the faith which is narrow and exclusive.

Tennyson's religion is tolerant, inclusive as goodness, generous as sunlight. It does not rest on tradition, history, or authority; but on the worth of the soul, the boundless love of God, and the testimony of spiritual things to their own greatness. He is a spiritual agnostic, insisting that we are not to learn of the eternal mysteries through the understanding or by the way of physical demonstration. To the spiritual in man they appear as true in themselves, being their own evidence and assurance. Not demonstration,

but faith, is the guide that leads surely on to those realms which lie beyond the way of sense and evidence: —

> We have but faith: we cannot know;
> For knowledge is of things we see;
> And yet we trust it comes from thee,
> A beam in darkness; let it grow.

It is not the faith resting solely on historic evidence which Tennyson here insists on as the ground of religious truth, but that which comes of intuition and a free exercise of mind and heart. It is the soul's assertion of its own worth and of the validity of that evidence which nature offers as to the existence of God.

The effect of that progressive movement in the church with which Tennyson has been in sympathy, was to banish dogma and the spirit which gave it life. It was not done by saying that there is no truth sure and substantial, but through a sympathetic recognition of the divergence of human opinions. The aim of religion pure and undefiled is not to secure uniformity of belief. Such a faith can only be reached by compulsion, which in itself must be detrimental to all that is best and sweetest in religion.

It must also be recognized that all human statements of truth are imperfect. Even that truth

which God has revealed is received by men who interpret it according to their capacity. It was the conclusion of the Broad Churchmen, therefore, that charity and toleration are worth more than uniformity of faith. They aimed to give men pure hearts rather than perfect truths. Their aim was to develop men in the spirit of the Gospel, rather than to build up a church.

With these aims and convictions Tennyson has been thoroughly in sympathy. He is not in any sense a dogmatist; but the essence of Christianity inheres in his poetry. It has vitalized his thought and broadened his sympathies. Christ is to him the infinite spirit of love. The church is for him an institution whose one aim is the development of the spirit and the reality of faith. He refuses to believe that there is any statement of belief the acceptance of which is essential to the true spirit of vital religion. When he says, "We have but faith," he is in no sense inclined to refuse to man the possibility of knowledge. He is not an agnostic. Faith is of the heart and the soul; it is a feeling and a conviction. It is the antithesis of dogma and not of knowledge. Faith itself is a knowledge of the most assured and assuring kind; and so it is that Tennyson presents it.

Truth may be known by our being absorbed into it, as well as by seeing it from the outside. It is by breathing its atmosphere and living its life that we really come to know it in the deepest and truest sense. While it remains in the intellect it is but a formula of logic. It must diffuse itself into every faculty and fibre of the mind before we can know it in a sense worthy of the name of knowledge. Such knowledge it is which Tennyson knows by the name of faith.

If we have but faith, it is no uncertain guide. It is a motive, an impulse, and an inspiration men need, and not a creed. Faith is the man who journeys with eager eyes and expectant hope towards a great city; dogma is the man who sits down by a dismantled and crumbling palace, convinced that there is all. Faith is crowned of life; dogma is enamored of death. Faith is a youth with eyes turned sunward; dogma is an old man, discouraged and dishonored. In the religion of faith is the hope of the world, that brightens the path of man and gives a higher lift to his thought.

Faith, toleration, helpfulness are the words of the Broad Church. They announce a purpose and a spirit in religion, and not a finality. The one spiritual end of religion is communion with

God; its one practical outcome is the service of man. Outside of this there is little to gain and much to lose. So it is the Broad Churchman goes to the heart of the whole matter, and seeks for what is real. The reality is faith, the seeing of the soul. Having faith we need no more.

It is not to be forgotten that faith is another name for experience. It is what has been experienced within, for faith is not the acceptance of truth on the testimony of history or tradition. Faith is the soul's vision of what belongs to its own nature. It is the demonstration which comes of spiritual experience.

It is with large realities, and not with petty notions, that religion should deal. Everywhere this is Tennyson's idea, and one that he makes worthy of the approval of broad-minded men. Religion is a thing of life and bloom and fruitage. It should touch and consecrate men at the hearth-side, and it should set their eyes on things pure and true in all the business of the world. It is a faith to inspire us. It is a spirit of love to realize in the daily life of the world, and it is an ideal that descends upon us like a glory and an enchantment. Such religion ever is in the poetry of Tennyson.

Every poet who is to do strong and true and helpful work must place himself in sympathy with the life and the aspirations of his time. He must feel that the tendencies about him are in some degree right, that they are leading the world in the direction in which it ought to go. He must rejoice in its hopes and its ideals, and he must find no joy higher than that of becoming a living voice to utter its sentiments. Not merely to follow but to lead, and to lead towards what is of human worth and of inspiring excellence, should be his aim. Tennyson accepts the questioning spirit of his time so far as it doubts the old creeds in their cruder teachings; but he sees underneath the stumbling words and the broken affirmations a truth sublime and substantial, and to this he ever holds. Science he knows in its large and truth-seeking spirit; but its mockery and its spirit of destruction he will not heed. He looks patiently into all which modern thought has to say about man, his origin and destiny; but he will not accept the materialistic conclusions with which so many are fascinated. To him the soul is its own witness, its own defence. The struggle of existence, the transformations of force, do not appeal to him: —

I think we are not wholly brain,
Magnetic mockeries; not in vain,
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death.

Too vague, perhaps, is the form Tennyson gives to his faith; but it is the vagueness of one who will not claim to know what he does not know. He does not rest his faith on the authority which gives an assured answer to every question which may be asked of the soul and the universe.

In such a faith as this, with all its vagueness, there is something grand and comforting. It has in it elements of strength as well as of weakness, and especially the strength which comes of perfect candor and honesty in dealing with the highest questions of life. It is not the faith of perfect trust, but of manly courage and a charity tolerant as life itself. It looks toward the future with eyes clear-seeing and a face betokening hope. No fear is in the heart of him who looks, but confidence and earnest resolve.

Tennyson is an original thinker, according to the manner of the poet. He has a creative mind; and he has invented new poetic methods. There is a charm about his poetry not to be found in that

of any other English poet; and he has given to our language new beauties and capacities. There is a freshness of creative insight in his work, that raises it to the highest levels of lyrical expression. He has intuition, imagination, artistic method, and charm of expression, in a remarkable degree.

In his personal life, in his family relations, in the company of his friends, and in his relations to royalty, in his attitude towards his time and in his sympathy with it, Tennyson is the ideal poet. There is something fine, large, and excellent in his relations to the English public, and in his attitude toward the great reading world which he has addressed through his poetry. No vices or defects have marred his life, no word of reproach can be uttered against him as to his moral and social conduct. His life has been consistent throughout, and in harmony with itself. The dreams of his youth have been fulfilled in old age. He has not outgrown or rejected the ideals of his early manhood. He has, in the largest sense, been true to himself, and done what it was in him to accomplish.

III.

RUSKIN.

THE beautiful is as useful as the practical, perhaps more so. — *Victor Hugo.*

I VENERATE him as one of the great teachers of the day. The grand doctrines of truth and sincerity in art, and the nobleness and solemnity of our human life, which he teaches with the inspiration of a Hebrew prophet, must be stirring up young minds in a promising way. The two last volumes of "Modern Painters" contain, I think, some of the finest writing of the age. He is strongly akin to the sublimest part of Wordsworth. — *George Eliot.*

HE is a great writer, as Rousseau was, — fresh, eloquent, audacious, writing out of the fulness of the present mood, and heedless how far the impulse of to-day may contravene that of yesterday. But as Rousseau was always faithful to his idea of truth, so Ruskin is always faithful to nature. When all his errors and paradoxes and contradictions shall have been utterly forgotten, this will remain to his praise. No man since Wordsworth's brightest days did half so much to teach his countrymen and those who speak his language, how to appreciate that silent nature "which never did betray the heart that loved her." — *McCarthy.*

HE has created a new literature, — that of art, — and all the subjects related to it; and the work he has done has more genius and is more original than any other prose work of our time. — *Stopford Brooke.*

I WAS much touched with what you say of Ruskin. Anything which makes him doubt his own infallibility will, I am sure, do him good. He is earnest, I am convinced, and will come quite right. — *Maurice.*

WHAT a little way, I thought, has all Ruskin's fire and eloquence made in driving into people so great a truth, a truth so fertile of consequences. — *William Morris.*

III.

RUSKIN.

One of the most characteristic intellectual signs of the times in England is the growth of interest in art. It is a popular movement, reaching to all classes in society, and expressing itself in every possible form. Love of beauty has become a passion and a pursuit. The æsthetic side of life has received an attention it never before commanded in England. The serious temper of the English people has hitherto kept them from that popular appreciation of art which has always existed in Italy and France. The puritan spirit, so long a dominant one, has looked on art as unworthy of men who have a serious purpose and who would give life a moral intent.

At the roots of the new growth of æsthetic interest is a changed conception of human nature. So long as the natural in man was looked on as vile and corrupt, as unworthy and debased, so

long art could not thrive. Through the aid of the French Revolution, German idealism, and other causes, and especially through a revival of the Greek spirit in thought and in literature, it has been seen that a rational aim in life is the true one. This changed temper of men's thoughts about life and its purpose has wrought a silent mental and moral revolution. It has given men a new conception of beauty and pleasure, and a higher interest in man as an individual being. All that is of a normal use of the world has come to be appreciated at a far higher value than before. Pleasure has ceased to be a sin; and beauty is no longer an allurement of evil. This changed attitude of thought has left men free to appreciate the claims of nature, and to rejoice in all that is natural, healthy, and free.

Somewhat of the Greek spirit has come back to men with the growth of modern thought. Where the mediæval spirit rejected all that is not otherworldly, the modern man finds in what is natural and rational the true law and test for the guidance of human life. The modern world rises to a higher point of view than either the Greek or the mediæval, for it combines the objectivity of the one with the subjectivity of the other, in a

true synthesis. An idealism which keeps itself healthy through an intimate sympathy with nature is the characteristic feature of modern thought. As a result, modern art turns to nature as the expression of a subjective life of great beauty and richness, manifested through its forms, colors, and changing aspects. Life is now appreciated for what it is in itself; and men find joy in whatever comes out of the natural exercise of its functions.

For art, the growth of naturalism has been a great gain. It has led to an appreciation of those objects, and to a development of those feelings, which awaken an artistic temper and motive. The Greek love of the human form has not returned, and cannot return; but with the development of naturalism there has come a sympathetic appreciation of whatever grows out of human experience. Nothing that is human is alien to me, may be taken as the spirit of modern art, alike in painting, poetry, and fiction.

The tendency to naturalism in art is represented in England by Turner and by Wordsworth. With both, the object of art was to effect a reconciliation between man and nature, by showing that in nature a like spirit to that in

man finds its abode. They led men away from classic art to commune with that which they found about them in the world of man and nature, with the view of describing accurately and minutely the impression made on them by this communion. Here was the inspiration for a new style of art, that should bring men back again into vital relations with the cosmos. It gave an immediate impulse to the development of art in all its forms. Men found a new delight in beauty, and a fresh satisfaction in contact with the natural world.

A tendency the opposite of naturalism has also helped to create the art revival. This is the revival of interest in the past; in part the result of scientific speculations, but more largely, so far as art is concerned, the legitimate product of the Oxford movement. This movement bade men look to primitive Christianity for a true expression of the religious life to which they aspired; and it found in the mediæval church an embodiment of what Christ taught. Its whole spirit was conducive to the growth of art, as it turned the attention of men to those times when art was intimately allied with the Christian consciousness. Art was then a symbolic method of expressing

the subjective life and aspiration of the soul. A new interest was awakened in Christian art as the result of the Oxford movement. Its great works were eagerly studied; and a revival of interest in Gothic art at once followed.

That wonderful expression of the human spirit which had been given in mediæval art again took captive the hearts of men, and it was seen how much of what goes on in the soul of man had there been interpreted in a manner full of noble purpose. The cry of the soul for purity and peace, the longing of men to escape from sin, and the vision which comes to them of a spiritual world environing and interpenetrating the material, all found interpretation in the art of that time.

Antagonistic as naturalism and mediævalism seemed to be, they soon blended with each other to produce the art revival of the present time. How that was effected may be seen in the work of the pre-Raphaelite brotherhood, the third agent in creating the new art interest. The first law laid down by this fraternity of artists was that nature is to be the only guide in art. Their movement was a revolt against the classic spirit, which had prevailed in English art up to their

time. They rejected rule and conventionality, and they went to nature as humble and faithful students of her forms and colors of beauty. They believed in the exact reproduction of nature, in minute and detailed imitation of her aspects and scenes. They were soon affected, however, by the revival of interest in the past, and with the spirit which the Oxford movement had created. They carried the same faithfulness to fact into their studies of the past as into their studies of nature; and they strenuously maintained that art should be faithful to the time and the people it interprets.

A few of the pre-Raphaelites remained faithful to the first purpose of their attack on conventionality; and they have been true successors to Turner. A much larger number have been affected by mediævalism, and have made art the symbolic interpretation of the soul's struggles and aspirations. They have given an impulse to the art revival, given it a character and purpose; but they have departed a long way from the purpose and spirit which first brought them together. It is not the naturalism of Rossetti's painting or poetry which now impresses the student of his work, but its quaintness and its

symbolism. Detailed reproduction of nature gave way with him to a desire to interpret the inner life of man, through the aid of a symbolism based on that of the mediæval church, but employed in a manner his own.

The outcome of these tendencies was a vast increase of interest in art. Many other causes conspired towards the same result and helped men to find a meaning in the beautiful which their fathers had not found there. It may be doubtful if art has as yet taken a deep hold upon the popular mind in England, and whether there is a universal appreciation of the best which art can produce. Love of bric-à-brac and the cheaply beautiful there is quite enough; but for art as an interpretation of life in a great and lofty spirit there is only as yet a faint appreciation. For the creation of great works of art, and their joyous acceptance by the people, England is not yet ready. There is no such spirit abroad as that which was manifest in the Gothic period of art production. Cities do not now vie with each other in the building of cathedrals and minsters or in the eager patronage of any other form of art.

With the broadening life of the modern world there can no longer be a concentration of the best

thoughts and aspirations of a people on one form of spiritual or artistic expression. Yet the middle of the nineteenth century in England will be marked as that of an era of what is popular in art, and of an interest which manifests itself in a zealous study of art in all its forms. The history of art, the purpose of art, have awakened an unbounded curiosity. Men have been fascinated by the beautiful. Love of the beautiful and sublime in nature has risen into a passion. The picturesque finds everywhere its admirers. Communion with nature has become necessary to the life of the time. Much of it is but shallow and heartless; but it marks the change from the drawing-rooms and the clipped gardens of the eighteenth century. Not the less does it mark a change from the revolutionary spirit of the age of Coleridge and Wordsworth.

The present tendencies in English art and literature are in part a continuation of those manifested in Turner and Wordsworth; but they have been modified by other and not less potent influences. In poetry, Keats is a leader now even more truly than Wordsworth, though the poetry of the present time fuses the spirit of these two men into one. Love of nature remains;

but the artistic touch and instinct of Keats are the more potent. This is to be seen in the poetry of Tennyson, who loves nature with a true and tender love, but not in the manner of Wordsworth. The intimate sympathy and communion which the older poet had with nature has not been attained by the younger. To Tennyson nature is a means of awakening the poetic impulse, rather than a guide and a friend. It is that in nature which makes it a source of art material which causes it to be attractive to him.

The art impulse of the Victorian era is to be seen in its poetry in a marked degree. It appears in a desire for greater poetic perfection in form, in the subjection of nature to a treatment synonymous with that of the painter, and in giving poetic treatment to subjects connected with the history and development of art. The poetry of Tennyson shows throughout his sympathy with the artistic revival of his time; and from him the poetry of the era has taken its direction and its spirit. In Swinburne and Morris the art impulse also finds an emphatic expression, in their doctrine that the poetic art creates its own motives and is its own justification. In his treatment of art themes Browning has shown how intently

the poets may now give themselves to an interpretation of this form of the soul's activity.

Wordsworth felt that his mission was that of a teacher; Tennyson regards his as that of an artist. Whatever the poet may now have to teach, he holds it to be subordinate to the production of artistic pleasure. He feels that he is a disciple of beauty, or its mouthpiece and interpreter. In artistic motives he believes poetry originates; and in the creation of artistic impressions he maintains that poetry ends. This is the temper of the poetry of the present time, and this the general spirit which it manifests. There are notable exceptions, as in the case of Browning; but even the exceptions show to what an extent the poetry of the age is dominated by the artistic impulse. Art for art's sake has become the word which interprets the tendency of the time, in poetry and in painting alike. It is a resolute word of rebuke to those who see in art only a dallying with what is of little moment; and it is an insistent word in behalf of the high mission of art to the soul of man. It is too exclusive and limited in its interpretation; but it gives to the art movement a distinct and emphatic meaning.

In the history of the art revival in England the name of one man will appear as among the greatest of the causes leading to it. The greatest of art critics, John Ruskin has taught the English the serious meaning of art, and in what manner it may contribute to the elevation and advancement of the noblest human interests. His love of art, his keen appeciation of what is best in it, the serious tone of his realism and his moral teaching, and the wonderful eloquence of his advocacy of the claims of art, have all helped to gain for him an attentive ear for what he has had to say in its behalf. Never before did art have such a champion as he has been. He has helped to form and to direct the art movement of his time. It would have come without his aid, as it has in other countries; but it would not have spread so widely or gained so strong a hold on the best English thought. His is the one name which represents the art movement, and is synonymous with all it has expressed. He could have gained the hearing he has in no other country than England, and it is English art for which he speaks. Sympathetic as he is with art in all its forms and schools, his is the serious temper of a true Englishman, who will not be content with art for its own sake.

The puritan spirit remains in his belief that the best art always joins itself to a healthy moral aim.

Whatever is best and whatever is weakest in the art revival is reproduced in Ruskin. The one definite aim with him has been that of finding in art whatever it has to teach the men of his time. He does not belong to one school or concentrate his thought into a definite system. In his teaching, art joins itself to every other form of human activity. It finds in religion, morals, science, and political life aids to its expression, and truths which it helps to interpret. In the same way, the art revival has been many-sided, and it has been sympathetic with art of every school and time. It has not that intense concentration of aim which appears in the periods of great creative activity. As Ruskin has been an art critic, and not a creator of art, so the art revival has been one of historic study more truly than of original production.

In the writings of John Ruskin art has become intimately associated with the poetic study of nature and with the noblest literary expression. As never before in England, art has become a literary theme of the first importance. A priest of humanity has made art and literature one to the peoples who use the English tongue.

I.

Under the guidance of his father, Ruskin early manifested his intense love of nature and art. Every summer his father was in the habit of driving in a chaise through a greater part of England, taking orders for his business house in London. With him often journeyed his wife and son; and they stopped wherever they pleased, to admire the beautiful scenery. Whenever a collection of pictures was heard of, that was visited, and whatever noble architecture they passed near. Ruskin had a passionate love of nature in his boyhood, which his father gave him an opportunity of gratifying, but which he could not have created. His power of comprehending nature was as instinctive as Mozart's capacity for music, which made him a composer at the age of four, and the despair of his masters only a few years later. Genius is not the result of contact with

other minds, the product of education, or the outgrowth of favorable conditions. When it appears it never hesitates to see and to understand what belongs to it, and it comes to its own as if they two had never been apart. It is such a passion for the beauties of nature which Ruskin possessed in youth, for he says: "Whenever they brought me near hills, and in all mountain ground and scenery, I had a pleasure, as early as I can remember, and continuing until I was eighteen or twenty, infinitely greater than any which has been since possible to me in anything, comparable for intensity only to the joy of a lover in being near a noble and kind mistress, but no more explicable or definable than love itself." In this wise genius acts whenever a masterful soul comes into the world, making him see the meaning of life and nature as easily as a young bird builds its nest.

Having no playmates, and being almost entirely shut out from childish amusements, Ruskin was thus early led to manifest his delight in the things of nature, revelling in the joy which they gave him. As he walked by the crags on the Derwentwater, and looked through the dark roots into the waters of the lake, he was filled

with "intense joy, mingled with awe." On a frosty morning, as he passed through one of the mountain glens, he beheld the rocks hung with icicles; and this scene he has described in a poem written when he was nine years old. It gives prophecy of the man that was to be, manifesting even then the wonderful power which Ruskin has always possessed, of seeing nature in its inmost secret meanings.

His instinct and passion for art came to manifest themselves almost as early as his love of nature. These, too, were brought to their expression by the tastes of his father. "My father," he says, "had a quite infallible natural judgment in painting; and though it had never been cultivated so as to enable him to understand the Italian schools, his sense of the power of the northern masters was as true and passionate as that of the most accomplished artist. He never, when I was old enough to care for what he himself delighted in, allowed me to look at a bad picture." And this father's care over the tender son bore the richest fruitage, adding to his instinct for beauty the cultivated taste which saved him from error; and it developed in him the critic's keenest capacity for knowing what is best, and for putting upon it

the mark of his approval. His love of art, as thus early given to seek what would perfectly satisfy itself, did not lead to the artist's creative power. He tried to become an artist, gave many years to the attempt; but there was some gift of touch, or some creative outreach of thought, which was wanting.

Not the less helpful to Ruskin was the influence of his mother, to whom he owed his literary training, his impulse towards moral excellence, and his strong religious inclinations. She gave him the Bible and the best of the English classics for his daily reading, and he absorbed from them what was most nutritious to the intellect, and what fed the moral earnestness of his nature. She made religion a flame of light to him, guiding his steps in the way of spiritual conviction and vision of soul. If his love of nature and beauty was great, in its earliest manifestations, not the less emphatically was he drawn towards that inward realm where the higher nature discloses other attractions as fascinating and as real. His love for the moral and spiritual was a master passion as ardent as that which guided him to art and to beauty of nature, so that he could never look upon the one without being confident the

other was inwoven with whatever it is or can become.

Ruskin's youth was all that could have been desired, promising much for him in the years that lay before him. In his home, in the guidance of his parents, through the training he received, in the impulses which awakened his genius to accomplishment, there was the assurance that his work would be good and the direction of it noble. That his earliest intellectual tendencies did not continue, and that he did not become artist or poet, is not a matter for surprise; for youth makes many experiments before it comes to that form of activity in which the man can work with the highest degree of success. He wrote many verses before his thirtieth year, and he wrote none after that time. That he is a poet these verses show us, for they reveal a fine wealth of imagination, a mind impelled by the richest tides of thought, and a heart warm with sympathy and emotion. Yet they do not give the highest promise of poetic power in the way of form and expression. His prose of the same period is more poetic than his verse, and mainly because verse acted as a clog to the free working of his mind. In his sweeping, on-rushing, and expan-

sive prose he is poetic and imaginative in a delightful manner; but the limits and necessities of verse do not give full swing to the boundless activity and range of his thought.

Ruskin went to Oxford in 1833, when the ferment of thought there was at its highest, when the religious life of England seemed about to be transformed with the ancient ardors of the Church, by a brave-souled band of men there teaching and praying. He went to Oxford from his mother's teaching one of the most ardent and convinced of evangelicals; and from that teaching no influence of Newman or any other had the power to sway him. Yet he was touched in some degree by the backward-looking hopes of that movement, and he caught something of its intense conviction concerning the dealings of God with men in those ages more simple and devout than our own. His criticisms of the materialism and selfishness of the present age are only to be understood in the light of his belief that the ages of an absorbing religious interest were better and nobler than those given to invention and science. In these university days, and under the same influence, he also learned to look upon art as a test of a nation's life, and to believe that it most

truly flourishes in an age when men are confident of the presence and companionship of God. Taking no interest in the ruder sports of his companions at the university, he gave himself to study and to those pursuits which had already proved to him so attractive.

At the age of twenty-four Ruskin began his literary career, by the publication of the first volume of his "Modern Painters." It was devoted to a vindication of the works of Turner from what he chose to regard as neglect and adverse criticism. It has the ardor and enthusiasm of youth stamped on its every page, and the zealous purpose to defend what he believed to be great and noble. Literature presents no finer instance of the chivalric defence of another's merits, or a purer spirit of devotion to another's genius. It was full of fresh insight, a high moral courage, and an intense enthusiasm for the beauty of nature. It struck out a new course of thought in æsthetics, gave to beauty an importance in the whole range of life it will retain hereafter, gave to nature an interpretation of the highest and richest kind, and brought sentiment to as fine an expression in literature as it has ever known.

Ruskin began his literary career as the defender of a great painter; but he went on as the champion of many true and beautiful causes, keeping the knightly temper of his first onset against the false and the ugly. An earnest student, a jealous lover of truth, he has been devoted to his calling with a singular oneness of aim and purity of intent. He has written many books, spoken many lectures, been the leader of a great art revival in England through his influence as the lecturer on art at Oxford, and done much to interpret morals and religion in a spirit of the highest truth and loyalty. One of the great prose writers of his time, Ruskin has helped to widen the love of the beautiful, and to unite it in the closest relations to all the truest interests of life. He has been to his generation a teacher and a prophet, clear of eye and pure of heart.

Ruskin is small in person, careless in dress, and nervous in manner. He has been described as having a spare, stooping figure, a rough-hewn, kindly face, a mobile, sensitive mouth, clear, deep eyes, sweet and honest in repose, earnest and eloquent in debate. An account of him given by one who visited him in his own house at Denmark Hill, says that he was emotional and

nervous, and his voice, though rich and sweet, had a tendency to sink into a plaintive and hopeless tone. His large, light eye was soft and genial, and his mouth was thin and severe. The brow was prominent, and the chin was receding. Crabb Robinson met him at a literary gathering, and described him as the most interesting person present, as talking well, and looking better, and as having a very delicate and a most gentlemanly countenance and manner. When he was a young man he met Miss Mitford, who said that he was very eloquent and distinguished looking, tall, fair, and slender, with a gentle playfulness, and a sort of pretty waywardness that was quite charming. Sydney Dobell met him in 1852, and made a fine pen-portrait of the great artist-critic: "The characteristics of his mouth and eyes are a susceptible, almost tremulous, appreciation that comes and goes about a shrewd acumen that is permanent; and an earnestness that pervades every feature, gives power to a face that would otherwise be merely lovable for its gentleness. His manner is very much an expression of all this." The man is not in these outward features, but they in some slight degree serve to make him known to us. Those who have known him do

not give us the same report of his person; but the man is in his books, because his mind and his heart are there. Few authors have put themselves more completely into their writings than Ruskin has done. His own personal history and opinions, his manner of life, the inmost soul of the man, are revealed to the attentive reader of his books, as in the case of almost no other author. He is sympathetic and confidential, touched with egotism, and always open and responsive to whatever influences life may bring to him.

Ruskin has the strong and insistent personality of genius, and he will not dress, live, or think in the manner of other men. He has given little heed to the conventional beliefs of his time in art, morals, or religion, preferring to follow his own convictions of truth and duty. His personality is impressed on his every word and act, and stands forth as a magnetic and commanding presence above all his work of every kind. In "Fors Clavigera" he has described his own life and his own purposes in that racy and magnetic style which he knows so well how to use when roused by indignation or contempt. "Because," he says, "I have passed my life in alms-giving,

not in fortune-hunting; because I have labored always for the honor of others, not my own, and have chosen rather to make men look to Turner and Luini, than to form or exhibit the skill of my own hand; because I have lowered my rents and assured the comfortable lives of my poor tenants, instead of taking from them all I could force for the roofs they needed; because I love a wood walk better than a London street, and would rather watch a sea-gull fly than shoot it, and rather hear a thrush sing than eat it; finally, because I never disobeyed my mother, and because I have honored all women with solemn worship, and have been kind even to the unkind and evil; therefore the hacks of English art and literature wag their heads at me, and the poor wretch who pawns the dirty linen of his soul daily for a bottle of sour wine and a cigar talks of the effeminate sentimentality of Ruskin."

II.

RUSKIN is one of the most beautiful of English prose writers. There is a magic touch and impress to his style, so easy and clear is it, while it is sonorous and musical, ornate and eloquent. It charms by its very richness and its ease, as it comes pouring forth from a full and noble nature. If Tennyson has given new capacity and variety to English poetry, Ruskin has done no less for English prose. His style is stately in form, the diction is rich with beauty and magnificence, and the purpose is always lofty and pure. He writes as one who gives his whole heart to what he says, who pours his words forth in a flood, with majestic intensity and the splendor of power. He has the gift of graceful utterance, so that every sentence is rounded and complete, happy in form, and instinct with charm. He has passion and energy, exuberance of nature and of words, a

sensitive appreciation of beauty and purity alike, and a magnificent imagination. No English author is more eloquent than he, or more capable of sustained flights of impassioned, magnetic, and powerful writing. Others may have a greater capacity for producing a deep and mighty effect, but no one adds this quality to his charm of style, his wealth of imagination, and his ability to draw the reader into the magnetic influence of his thought. His books are not like a flower garden, wherein we are impressed with the color and the variety of beauty, arranged with a pleasing effect; but a great park, where all is stately and impressive, delicate and delightful, with the naturalness of nature herself. There are no mere ornaments, no petty decorations, in his writing; only the majesty, and the sweep, and the glory of nature and the loftiest themes.

A free and a strong imagination Ruskin has, that would have made him a great poet had he possessed the other qualities necessary. Its sweep is too wide and commanding for poetry, and only finds its fit expression in his eloquent and majestic prose. Cramped by the exigencies of poetry, he finds adequate outlet for his nature in the prose of his flowing and impassioned

descriptions of nature, and in his appeals for human obligation and obedience.

His mind is too discursive for poetry, too impetuous and unrestrained. He rushes eagerly on when he has a thought to utter, with little order and system, careless of logical sequence if he can but give his ideas and his emotions full expression. He lacks concentration, logical power, and philosophic insight. His is the prose of emotion and imagination, more than of logic and reason. There is no continuity, no system, no orderly unfolding of a distinct purpose, in his "Modern Painters"; and the same is true in a large measure of all his writings. He often loses in power by the use of too many words; and he does not adequately impress his thought on the world, because of his failure to give it a logical and a compact statement. Whatever comes to his mind at any moment he turns aside to, however irrelevant it may be. Especially in his lectures is the reader annoyed with his habit of wandering far and wide. His style has lost in charm in his later writings, though it has gained in ease and familiarity.

Keenly sensitive, tenderly sympathetic, and highly impressionable Ruskin is in every touch

and throb of his nature. Exquisitely and delicately appreciative of the presence of beauty or of ugliness, he is easily thrown out of balance and made to feel that his magnetic relations with nature and life are broken. His writings vibrate with nervous flexibility and keenness of sensibility. Every change in nature he feels; his environment gives the joy or grief of the day; what does not harmonize with his nature repels him and jars upon him. His writings everywhere show this magnetic and responsive character of his thought, for he utters the word and the impression of the hour.

Ruskin writes what he thinks and feels at the moment, unmindful of what he has said before. His books are the outpourings of his heart, the fresh and free-spoken thoughts of an open and responsive nature. He conceals nothing, he excuses nothing; all is given to the reader in confidence and freedom. When we read his books we feel that we are meeting him face to face, that he is sitting by our side and freely conversing with us.

Ruskin is the prose interpreter of the poetical and artistic side of life. We do not live by logic, but by feeling and sympathy. Life is joy, beauty,

and harmony with nature. The tramp of armies, the rush of the steam-car, the whirl of machinery, are not in his books; for he hates them all. It is quiet, peace, virtue, manliness, he delights in, and which inspire his pages. To live healthily, to love faithfully, to act truly, is what he preaches. He is the prophet of beauty; and by beauty he means harmony, health, and wholeness. It is sympathy of man and nature, responsive to and accordant with each other.

Fortunate the generation which has such a man for its teacher. His faults are nothing, soon forgotten. His genius is primary, life-giving, with power of inspiration. He delights us with the charm and sensitiveness of words; he reveals to us the world-wide beauty which lies around; he opens to us the fountains of joy and melody in the heart; he kindles on the altar of humanity the passion-flames of love and sympathy. When we truly know him he is no more the author and the critic; he becomes a guide, a friend, and a beloved companion. He so takes us home to his heart that we can but make him our own bosom companion and confidant. What author so much like a brother!

III.

Imagination with Ruskin is not the organ of fiction but of truth, the friend and helpmate of every faculty in man, the pioneer and guide in every search for a larger comprehension of the world. It has given him Wordsworth's capacity for seeing nature instinct with the Divine Life, and for beholding in it a spiritual beauty and power sublime and wonderful. It has made him one of the greatest of the describers of the natural world. New beauties and new meanings have been revealed to him as existing in all its forms and expressions. His minute observation, his powerful imagination, his intuition of beauty and harmony, and his ability to make others feel that what he describes really exists, have made him a wonderful interpreter of nature. His descriptions of cloud, sea, and mountain scenery show him at his best as an observer

and writer. He describes what he has seen with fidelity, but not in its bare details or in its mere outward phenomena. He penetrates through the facts of nature to their meanings for the artist and the lover of beauty, seeing what others pass by without waiting to behold. He seems to be in league with nature, and she yields up to him her secrets, showing him her most beautiful aspects, as a maid to her lover. He has a sympathetic eye for her charms, he watches her in a wide variety of her manifestations, and his imagination is instinctively sure in its penetration of her meanings. He has given to nature a spiritual meaning similar to that which was presented by Wordsworth; but his knowledge of her individual forms in sky and sea, leaf and bird, has been greater in range and more instinctively true in its penetration of her secret meanings.

As the interpreter of nature Ruskin is the equal of Rousseau as the interpreter of human sentiment, and he has produced a similar change in the common opinions of men. What is simple and natural in man found in Rousseau an expositor who has reached all intelligent persons with the extraordinary influence of his thought. He produced a revolution by his teachings, and

helped to restore to man the ability to accept the natural worth of his own being. All which he taught was not wise, and he did not himself realize the full meaning of his own teachings. He often went wilfully astray; but he gave an impulse in the right direction, and brought to the world a fresher and a happier way of looking at human nature and its needs.

Rousseau had the same spirit towards nature, feeling a keen personal sympathy with it, reading into it his own spirit, giving it a human significance and burden. A like tendency may be seen in Schleiermacher and Goethe; in Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley; in Turner and Ruskin. In one way and another all these men caught something of the better Greek spirit, renewed and transformed by the manifold tendencies of the modern world. At its basis is the thought that God is immanent in the universe, that he is manifest in the order and beauty of nature, in the virtue and manhood of men, that the life and light of all things is the Indwelling God. No curse on nature, no absolute depravity in man, is the result of this thought; but God revealed through and speaking in both. A broader, a more human, and a happier theology came out

of it for Schleiermacher and Maurice; a fresher and a truer poetry for Wordsworth; and a more faithful and loving art for Ruskin. Wordsworth saw in nature a light far more deeply interfused than that of setting suns; the light of the Infinite Life, revealed to the eye and heart of man. To him, therefore, nature had a solemn import, a divine meaning, and a revelation of joy and truth. Not a series of material forces, not an unmeaning opposition to man, was nature as Wordsworth read it, but an orderly and living manifestation of God himself. Therefore every fact of it, every law of it, every glimmer of beauty on its face, was a truth to be studied and adored. To love nature was a worship to him; to study her an act of religion.

In the same spirit Ruskin went to nature as the basis of art and saw in her the manifestation of spiritual power, beauty, and peace. To him she has been alive with meaning as she had been to Wordsworth; her every fact, her every meaning, her every manifestation, has been accepted joyfully and with solemn respect. To be perfectly truthful to nature was therefore demanded, for only through loyalty and obedience to her can the truth God put into nature be made known to

us. It is not the purpose of art to copy nature, as Ruskin understands it, but to read its meaning as the dwelling-place of Deity. It speaks to him with a man's voice, with a human expressiveness, as revealing the same sympathies, emotions, and virtues that we possess. His realism is not that of the Dutch school of painters, nor that of the materialistic men of science. He is faithful to nature because nature has an intellectual and a moral meaning, because it speaks to us of a beauty and a truth which are in harmony with all eternal and worthy things of which man can hope to know.

Ruskin has carried forward the work of Rousseau, Goethe, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. The natural world is to him the divine world, nature the habitation of the Eternal Spirit, art the voice of God's truth. The "natural-supernaturalism" of Carlyle he has accepted with the utmost confidence, as he has accepted Carlyle as his greatest master in his moral teachings and in his criticisms. It is not only because nature is beautiful that he admires her, but also because God tabernacles in her. It is not her outward form, but her inner meaning, which most attracts him, and which he is most eager to have presented.

Nature is true to God, uncorrupted, faithful, and happy. The law of moral truth she manifests in her order and her beauty. In his thought, God, man, and nature belong to one order, unite into one interblending harmony, interfuse with and interpret each other, and speak face to face the communion of accordant spirits. In any just estimate of Ruskin's work and teachings this philosophic attitude of his must be recognized. A realist, as Wordsworth was a realist, to rank him with those who see in nature nothing beyond its own material order, would do him grave injustice. He is as religious as Raphael or Angelico, Dante or Milton: religious in believing that the natural world is truthful and good; that manhood and loyalty of heart are the loving worship which God demands. He turns away from the supernatural, because God is here in flower, cloud, and child. He cares not for angels and distorted attempts to express the spiritual, because the whole world is spiritual, through and through, and alive with the motives of God's infinite purpose.

Ruskin has helped us to see in nature what men had not seen there before, to perceive the beauty we had not before realized as existing.

He has also aided Wordsworth in giving us a point of view from which to comprehend the spiritual meanings of nature. Cultivated men and women can no longer go through life indifferent to the changing aspects of the outward world, or unheeding the beauty revealed in sky and landscape, sea and mountain. To be indifferent to the charm, and the joy, and the fresh sustaining power, and the health of nature is no longer possible; and to Ruskin more than to any other person since Wordsworth this is due. He is not an artist alone, seeking fine scenes to put on canvas; but he is the lover of nature in all her aspects of repose and sublimity; alike in her quiet beauty and her amazing splendor.

IV.

Ruskin is a critic in the largest and best sense which can be given to that word, defining him as one who points out the limitations of life and shows the way to what is higher and better. It is not right to regard the critic as a mere fault-finder, or as one who tests words and actions by rule and standard. He is one who has a genius for truth in words and rightness in action, whose sympathies are so wide and whose instincts are so sure that he holds men steadily to the best and the purest. In this sense Ruskin is a critic, and one of the most worthy which this century has produced in England. In aim he has been noble, in theory right, in methods sound. That which is capable of keeping the critic sound in judgment and sweet in temper Ruskin has; a passionate love of nature and man. Whatever his faults, he has been steadily true to those

things which are of the highest import and the most enduring worth.

With the evils of a materialistic and money-making age he has always been at war, saying hard and bitter things of them oftentimes; he has been querulous and impatient; but he has come back again surely to nature and man, and to his constant delight in their beauty and their good. His exquisite sensitiveness to beauty gives tone to Ruskin's criticism. Like a delicate instrument he vibrates to every sound. Physical or moral ugliness jars upon him; it brings discord and pain.

At the foundation of his criticism is his standard of life. What is life for? To get gain, to eat, drink, and be merry, to make the earth a place for toil and machinery? To Ruskin, none of these things in any degree indicate a true standard of life or a true appreciation of what it offers us. Life is for devotion, manhood, and joy. What will promote these things is good; what hinders them is evil. What gives to life a large, happy, virtuous, and beautiful meaning receives his praise. Commercial success and mechanical enterprise are too material, breed ugliness, foster competition, destroy the face of nature and

the faces of men, and make poverty and wretchedness common in the world. With Rousseau, Ruskin would take men back to nature, to simple virtues, to manly deeds. As no man can grasp all truth, or decide to a hair's breadth where the right is to be found, Ruskin has done well to make the health and the hope, the purity and the beauty of life, the test of what men are to accept from the poet and the artist. That this is the only point of view for the critic is not to be assumed; but that it is one worth presenting no one can deny. A high aim and a consistent adherence to it are all that can be asked of the critic. In neither direction has Ruskin missed the highest mark of his calling.

It is not as an art critic only that Ruskin is to be regarded, for he considers this the least important part of his work; and he has ever kept art subordinate to the moral and social aims of life. He has done much to awaken a new and a higher interest in art, to diffuse just conceptions of what is its true province, and to teach people how to judge of it. This he has done; but in doing it he has been a critic of life itself, of its purpose and fulfilment. He has not merely written of the laws and methods of art, and of the peculiarities

of the schools; but he has shown what is the effect of art, in its various manifestations, on the whole outcome of life. That a pure and a noble art is healthy and helpful, and that a coarse and impure art is degrading and dangerous, he has made it a main purpose of his writing and lecturing to prove. In the "Stones of Venice" he writes with charm and power of the influence of a degraded art on the moral life of the people; and in the "Seven Lamps of Architecture" he has defined the moral aims which enter into any true art work. Resolute, clear, and right he is in his writing of this kind, bold to point out errors, and brave to commend what is good.

Ruskin thoroughly understands the mission of the true critic. He has had a high and just standard of criticism, a distinct and worthy conception of life itself, and the purpose to teach men a lofty ideal. Seeing very distinctly what he thinks men ought to become, he has been capable of making others see as clearly. To those not overcome by the commercial spirit his criticism has been like that of an elder brother, to be accepted as the word of friendship and good will. He has not been a preacher, though keeping the moral aim very prominent; for he has looked at

life on all sides, delighted in beauty as well as in conduct, and believed in the joy of life as well as the duty. When Fichte taught that a true religion and a true education consist in a rounded and full expression of what is in man, he but went before Ruskin to state the same deeply underlying conception. With Ruskin there has been no theory of a balanced development of the whole man, but such teaching and such admonition as lead to this result. Loving the beautiful and the artistic with a master-passion, he has been too broad-minded to regard these as constituting the chief good that the world yields to us. It is this breadth of vision, this range of sympathy, and this comprehensiveness of spirit, which make him a genuine critic. The artist is inclined to care only for beauty, the moralist only for virtue, the merchant only for material prosperity. Ruskin rises above all these, to that height of human perspective where a true consensus can be had of the activities of man, and where they can be understood in their proper relations. High above all else he puts the development of the soul through the world-experiences of man; and underneath he ranges the other functions down to the lowest, on which all the others rest. He has

devised no system, and made no table of human duties; but he ever keeps before himself the fact that human nature is a whole, that in a full and faithful life every faculty shares, and that we are not to live for what is sensual and subordinate.

Having a distinct conception of what life means, and what should be the spirit in which we deal with it, Ruskin has been able to make his criticism effective and helpful. To be true, right, and pure, is what he has demanded of the artist, as of other men, and those not willing so to be he has not spared. In a century like ours, a strong, steady, and hopeful voice calling to men in the name of truth, purity, and right is needed as few others are. It is no thankful task to point out the faults of the world; for men love to be praised for the little good they do, rather than to be blamed for the much evil. The voice in the wilderness of the world's depravity and sin, calling to repentance and good works, heard by few or many, does more for man than that which only prophesies of smooth things. It is such a voice alone which announces the advent of the Master. There are times when the critic is more needed than the poet; and Ruskin has

done more for art than any artist the time has produced.

It is not well that all which literature gives to us should be laden with hope too sanguine to see life as it is. Better it is that we should often hear the truth about ourselves and our own time, so that conceit should not grow too large, and self-satisfaction become a weed that overtops all flowers. The competent critic cannot speak too plainly, however unwilling men may be to listen, and however fanatical they may judge him to be. When he compares the present time with others, as most men do not, being satisfied with what is, he may do the men of his own day the most important service, and a service which can be rendered only by the fearless and clear-seeing student and critic of human nature. Every age has its idiosyncrasies, which can be understood only by a wide-reaching study of history, and by a penetrative insight into the influences which affect and control the direction of human feeling and thought. Making such a comparison the critic rests his judgments on a basis of truth.

The critic has no absolute standard of truth; wisdom has not been opened to him more than to other men. His individual limitations must

appear in whatever criticisms he may make on the doings and sayings of other men; and they are almost invariably those not only which pertain to the individual, but those also which mark the school of thought, the time, and the country to which he belongs. There are fashions in thought as in dress; and the critic partakes of the era of which he is a part. The trend of thought which sets through it affects him as well as the poet and the artist. In a time of idealism, he measures all the art products of the world in the light of his faith in the individual soul. In a time of scientific research and agnostic speculation, he interprets every effort of the imagination by the aid of heredity and universal law.

There being no literary standard which can be applied with unfailing certainty, so that we can measure and interpret all literary products with rigid exactness, we must read the critic's sayings by the help of what he is as a man. The criticisms of Lessing, Schlegel, Taine, Carlyle, and Lewes are not to be read as if they all interpreted man and nature in the same way. Even their literary judgments are affected by their philosophical theories. Carlyle and Taine will not agree about Goethe or the French Revolution,

simply because they do not agree about the nature of man and the controlling force in the universe. It is important, therefore, that we should know where the critic belongs, what company he keeps, what coterie or fashion he affects, and what philosophy he embraces.

Ruskin is not a lesser Wordsworth or a revived Rousseau, however much he may resemble these writers in some respects. In his love of nature and man he is one with them; but in his philosophy and his religion he does not walk with them hand in hand. To the revolutionary period Ruskin does not belong either with his head or with his heart. His sympathies are neither with those who preceded the revolutionary period nor with those who came after it. Even less is he to be ranked with the men of the present time of scientific enthusiasm; for at all points he is a critic and opponent of science in its evolutionary and agnostic tendencies.

Ruskin's attitude towards science, the social problems of the day, religion, and art, is only to be understood by a careful analysis of that phase of thought expressed in the Oxford movement, pre-Raphaelitism, and the renascence of mediævalism in art and poetry. The burst of enthusiasm

which welcomed in the revolution had spent its force, the human spirit became exhausted of its fresh energies and hopes, the world was not reformed and transformed with the speed of a whirlwind, and men sank back discouraged into the beliefs which ages had sanctioned with their approval. This reaction against the doctrines of the revolution is to be marked in the later teachings of Wordsworth and Coleridge; and from them the tide set in the direction of the past. While the movement of the great body of the English was towards reform in politics, and a more rational construction of religion, a lesser company had its eyes turned on the ages gone before. There were those who were above all things anxious to know how to prevent a new revolution. They were not eager for new truth, not zealous for a coming kingdom of freedom and rationality, and they were not confident that man can guide his own way to the true destiny which awaits him. It was for assured truth they yearned, and confidence that they were embosomed and sustained of God. They looked back with approval upon the ages when men were absorbed in the building of great cathedrals, when Western Europe was united in the idea

of a Catholic church, and when men had an unquestioning faith in God.

Something of the spirit of that movement came to Ruskin. It is in his love of Gothic art, in his hatred of science and mechanical advancement, and in his social theories. He did not become a Puseyite or an anglo-Catholic; but his criticisms are inspired by something of the same frame of mind, the same fears for the present and the same faith in the past. With much that is in entire opposition to the Oxford movement, there is to be found in him much that grows out of the same causes. Distrust of the revolutionary period in most of its phases appears in him as much as in Newman, and a refusal to believe that the post-revolution era is an advance on the mediæval time of unity and faith. With the growth of democracy, and machinery, and materialistic science, art, religion, and social happiness have languished, or ceased to exist in any noble form. Such is the direction taken by much of his criticism, especially by that of the latter half of his life. He is not in sympathy with those movements in our time which are hailed with delight by so many as indications of the world's advancement towards a day of ample knowledge and social

unity. To him they are signs of anarchy, infidelity, and a debased art; signs also of a loss of moral power and true intellectual insight.

Rousseau, Wordsworth, and Newman each possess some of the characteristics which we see in Ruskin. All three directed their eyes to the past as well as the future; and all three were more concerned for the things of the inner man than for those of the outward world. In his sympathies, his intellectual convictions, and his social theories, Ruskin has been such a critic as this combination of qualities would indicate. It is to the time of strong and assured faith he directs his eyes, when art was to men a passion and an insight, and when masterful minds ruled over them with the power of genius. It is to the standard of what was greatest in such an age, as seen through the glamor of his imagination, that he brings our own time, and finds it to be defective. We ought to be judged, however, in so far only as art is concerned, by a time which has given to the world so little that is great and noble.

In the technical sense Ruskin is not a critic safe and sound. He has not the intellectual and logical acumen which are necessary for the profes-

sional criticism of the world's artistic products. He has the seeing eye rather than the analytic brain; he loves beauty for its own sake, and not because of the proportions in which it is combined. He is not always a sure guide to the technical interpretation of art; for he never looks at it in its dry details, but only as seen through a halo of sentiment, and out of eyes deep-set with genius and poetry. He misread the life of Turner, because he could not look at it with eyes undazzled by beauty and heart untouched with sentiment. Turner died wealthy, successful beyond most men, and with many more friends than he had the sympathy to appreciate; but Ruskin saw him as the mediæval knight saw the lady of his love, through a glimmer of glowing sentiment, and as one whose cause at all hazards must be defended. Turner said that Ruskin saw in his works what he never put there; and it is this gift of imaginative interpretation which makes Ruskin the commanding and authoritative critic which he is in regard to every form of artistic work. There are no rules according to which a work of art can be fashioned; no recipe has been devised for an epic, a statue, or a great painting. Only when such a rule has been dis-

covered can the critic have a standard for the exact measurement of a work of true art. Any attempt to measure the artist, in whatever kind, other than sympathetically, is a failure; and criticism has again and again shown the folly of such presumption. It is not the ability to point out errors in versification or construction which makes a critic of poetry, simply because the heart and living worth of any true poem are not to be found in such technicalities. It is a commanding insight into a wider range of life than that to which the poet has given himself in his work, which alone makes a critic worthy of the name.

The true critic is not he who analyzes a work of art into the tattered shreds and patches of defect, but he who shows its relations to the other parts of that great temple in which humanity worships the beautiful. The artist expresses all the deep passionings of his soul on one instrument, while the critic is he who directs the orchestra that pours forth all the struggles and aspirations of mankind. Such a critic Ruskin is in the temper and range of his thought, his wealth and loftiness of vision, and his closeness and heartiness of sympathy. It is the whole man

he brings to his work as a critic; not a coldly logical intellect, trained in the narrow formalisms of the schools. He is a man alive with sentiment, glowing with sympathy, looking kindly at the efforts of other men to give beauty a fitting form; and he judges as one who has himself been touched and transformed by the glowing ardors of creation, and whose eyes are also set with tender ravishment on all the deeds of men.

In his earlier books Ruskin is limited by his attempts at fine writing, and by his desire to follow Richard Hooker and the other masters of English prose, as he has admitted. In the later he writes mainly for a listening audience, and his style is of that loose and familiar kind best suited for oral delivery. There is too much attention to the manner of his writing in the "Modern Painters," "Stones of Venice," and "Seven Lamps of Architecture," and too little in the lectures of the last twenty years. Of late, too, he has grown impatient of what he does not like, petulant and complaining, often querulous and fault-finding. This being true, he has manifested none of Carlyle's savage hatred of shams, or his volcanic outbursts against the ideas not in sympathy with his own. Ruskin has lost not a little of his influ-

ence by his spirit of contempt and his tone of pessimism. To be in harmony with one's age is better for the sake of reputation, and more reposeful to the nerves; but the highest spirit of truth bids men speak what they really think, and strike at what they believe to be wrong and vicious. When we can look at Ruskin's work with a broader perspective than is now possible, the faults which seem so large in him will recede into the background, while his genius and his eloquence, his joy in nature and the good of man, will come forward into conspicuous importance.

In the main drift and meaning of Ruskin's work he is sound, sure, and strong, seeing what is right, and saying it in a way true and good. But in many matters of lesser interest and importance he seems to be as wrong-headed and wilful as possible. He will not come to America, because there are no castles here; he says there should be a special dress for each class in society; he has criticised painters whom he could not approve, until he has been brought into court for it. In a great number of such opinions and actions he seems to be quite out of the way of what is simple and sensible.

None the less, here is a critic who has redeemed his task from the charge of low and unworthy aims, and who has done his work in a manner true and manly. The work of correction with him has been one of education; he has taught more than he has reproved. If he has gone through the garden others have planted, pointing to errors in the laying out of the grounds and in their decoration, it has not been alone to indicate defects; but he has also shown a better way of adornment and plotting, and he has set the fashion with his own hands. Teaching the artists to see the beauty and the meaning of nature, he has shown them wherein they failed, and how to do truer and more perfect work. He has been a critic only because he had something large and worthy to teach, which itself becomes a means of correcting what is smaller and less true. He has done much to make criticism a constructive work, because he has not been contented with the arbitrary laws laid down in books of rhetoric and logic, applying them to the writings of other men; but he has gone to nature and humanity, studied them in their relations to human expression of every kind, literary as well as artistic, and there found a canon of criticism worthy to be

applied in the name of creative genius. Not to laws of taste has he called our attention, nor to laws of invention and coloring; but to laws of fact and truth, laws of beauty and joy. Such criticism becomes essentially constructive and poetical; and on it as a foundation must rest all true art. It differs from creation in being an intuitive appreciation of beauty, rather than a constructive and instinctive expression of it. Joined to a masterly and delightful style, and to a sympathy for nature and man of the keenest, such criticism itself becomes both artistic and poetical. It gives us joy with its beauty, it satisfies the intellect with its facts and its laws, and it strengthens the moral nature with its rightness of aim. A new mission and a new spirit have come to criticism as Ruskin has dealt with it, for it has ceased to be literary and fastidious, and come to be one with life and its genuine interests. It includes art, morals, and religion, in a synthesis higher and more vital than either, because free from the limitations which each has when pursuing by itself the ends it seeks. At the heart of it, and always in its truer spirit, has Ruskin's criticism been such as this in its constructive reach and purpose.

V.

RUSKIN'S chief work has been done as a critic of art, and as the result of his desire to expound the great principles underlying its development. To this exposition has he especially devoted the "Modern Painters," "Stones of Venice," "Seven Lamps of Architecture," "Elements of Drawing," "Laws of Fiesole," and his numerous lectures on art. His work has been very different from that of the creative artist, but it has been none the less valuable. It is of a kind which no artist could have accomplished, but it is of the highest importance for the comprehension of art as an expression of the instinct in man for beauty and for creation. The artist can appreciate what is beautiful, he has an instinct and a passion for it, and he is possessed of a genius for embodying in forms of artistic loveliness that beauty which is the delight of his soul; but he is not likely to understand the relations of this instinct for creation to

the other manifestations of the higher life in man, or the principles on which its true development depends. Only he who sees in art one of the manifestations of man's creative activity, who studies its various phases in relation to the historic development of the race, who can truly appreciate the effects of art on use, morals, and religion, and the results which these in their turn produce on art, can give a satisfactory interpretation of the functions and principles of art.

This is the work which Ruskin has done; and it has been one of the greatest importance, not only for the art, but also for the culture of his time. As he has accomplished his work, it has not in any degree been one of compiling the general laws of art; but he possesses such a rare and unrivalled genius that he speaks with the profoundest insight and authority. He has expounded the true meaning of the artist's calling in its relations to human culture, and the spirit in which its highest results are to be attained. He has interpreted the world of beauty with which the artists have to deal, and set forth the laws of it; and he has declared to them how the mind must act in order to find the highest measure of that beauty. His work has not been alone

that of criticising them and their methods; but he has gone to nature, studied its manifestations under every aspect likely to attract the artist, and shown what are its facts and its laws. Nature thus becomes the critic who condemns the artist's unfaithful work. Ruskin has been a most loving student of the outward world, delighting in its every phase of beauty and activity, and watching it as a lover his beloved, lest any look of that dear one should escape him. All true art, he believes, grows out of the love of nature, and from the root of affection for her. "He who works humbly with nature," he said in one of his earlier books, "will seldom be in danger of losing sight of art. He will commonly find in all that is truly of man's work something of their original, for which he will regard them with gratitude, and sometimes follow them with respect. While he who takes art as his authority may entirely lose sight of all that it interprets, and sink at once into the sin of an idolater and the degradation of a slave."

First of all, Ruskin has aimed his criticism at the conventional in art, declaring that it is false and unworthy, and that it fails to satisfy the æsthetic sense. He would have men see the world as it is, have regard to truth, and aim at presenting

the life which everywhere speaks through nature. As opposed to the conventional, when it presents itself in forms which have become unmeaning, and in expressions which have lost their life-giving power, he calls men to behold the joy, the beauty, and the variety of the natural world. In contact with that are freshness of spirit, health of conscience, and joy of the whole being to be gained; away from it, all is dearth and dreariness. Before Rousseau the theoretical conception of society was stiff, and formal, and conventional; after him it became simple, loving, and natural. Before Wordsworth men looked on nature as dead, unlovely, and grievous; after him they saw it to be alive, beautiful, and joyous. Before Ruskin the English artists delighted in the formal, the conventional, and the traditional; as they have been affected by his teachings they have come to love the pure, the truthful, and the natural. With the same bold enthusiasm and the same prophet's zeal as his predecessors possessed has he called men to behold the true in the world about them. In it are to be found the highest beauty, the keenest delight, the purest moral satisfaction. This makes life worth its sacrifices and its burdens; makes these lighter and more easily borne.

To be in harmony with nature, to feel its great and joyous life pulsing about one, to sympathize with it in light, in storm, and in tender forms of beauty, is a privilege and delight for all who come to her in the child's spirit. The spirit of presumption and self-seeking yields nothing great and good; but to the humble, the trusting, and the loving of heart, nature is like a fond mother, ready to open her treasures, and to tell many a delightful tale concerning them.

Ruskin says to the artists, Be true; and this is his principal teaching. Man should be as truthfully portrayed as nature herself. There is that in man which is worthy of the highest respect and honor — of so much respect and honor that we ought not to debase his nature or lower the standard of his action. He is to respect himself so much, whether as artist or as critic, that he will speak only the truth. And man is not only to be regarded in his relations to truth, but the artist must feel for and with him. No artist in any kind can do his work as it ought to be done unless he has sympathy with humanity. The artist, as an artist, does not attain to the full measure of what man is, when he studies him merely as one of the phenomena which life presents. To feel

the joy and pain of others as our own, to enter with inmost unity of spirit into what men live for and take joy in, is absolutely necessary to the artist who would give a worthy interpretation of human life in any of its aspects.

Great as has been Ruskin's love of nature, his love of man is greater, and it is nearer to all the throbbings of his heart. The centre of his thought and work is man, and he would have us believe that nature and art are only to be tested by what they do for humanity. To him nothing is of value which does not come within the range of human interests, and no science is to be cared for which does not add to human life. "The main aim and principle of this book," he says in "Modern Painters," "is that it declares the perfectness and the eternal beauty of the work of God, and tests all work of man by concurrence with or subjection to that." Nature, as the eternally abiding and unchanging reflection to man of God's law and will, is an element in his teaching of the most conspicuous importance. It is not nature as a beautiful object, as the medium of beauty and joy, which most of all attracts him; but it is nature as the reflection of the Infinite Artist to the imagination and conscience of man to which he gives his

heart. He is interested in man more than in nature, because in man there is a personal response to the word of the Eternal Truth, growth under the law of freedom, and moral illumination as the highest outcome of his being. "In these books of mine," Ruskin says, in the third volume of "Modern Painters," "their distinctive character as essays on art is their bringing everything to a root in human passion or human hope. Arising first not in any desire to explain the principles of art, but in the endeavor to defend an individual painter from injustice; they have been colored throughout, — nay, continually altered in shape, and even warped and broken, by digressions respecting social questions which had for me an interest tenfold greater than the work I had been forced into undertaking. Every principle of painting which I have stated is traced to some vital or spiritual fact; and in my works on architecture the preference accorded finally to one school over another is founded on a comparison of their influence on the life of the workman — a question by all other writers on the subject of architecture wholly forgotten or despised." What will help towards the perfection of man has ever been foremost in Ruskin's aims and in his works.

More than almost any other moral teacher Ruskin has made everything take rank in accordance with the influence it produces on the human affections. He does not value art in and for itself, but for the sake of what it does to satisfy the thought and the life of man. He applies moral standards to it on all occasions, as when he says that "art should be noble in conception, delicate in execution, true in perception, precise in arrangement, and faithful in fulfilment." He has developed his theory of art in the "Laws of Fiesole," in words concise and eloquent: "I have endeavored to teach through my past life that this fair tree Igdrasil of human art can only flourish when its dew is affection; its air, devotion; the rock of its roots, patience; and its sunshine, God."

To him, the theory that art is for art's sake alone, for the sake of mere beauty and the satisfaction of the æsthetic nature, is not wholly sound or true. All art, as he understands it, is moral; and there can be no thoroughly true and genuine development of art that is dissociated from the moral element in life. In more than one of his books he has written in his most rhetorical and eloquent strain of the corruption produced in art, and its gradual decadence and destruction, when

the moral element has been lost sight of in a mere love of beauty and luxury. It is impossible to separate the products of the æsthetic nature from those of the other human faculties, and to judge them wholly by themselves. All the faculties are faculties of one and the same being, belong to the same nature, and testify to the realities of the same world. Man is not a bundle of unrelated organs, but a living soul. There is unity and consent of all his faculties, when rightly used, to one purpose. It is idle, therefore, to select the products of any one faculty, or set of faculties, with the purpose of judging these by themselves. No such separation and special judgment is possible; for all the faculties cohere together in one living whole, to give testimony on every subject which comes before them. In art, the æsthetic nature leads; but every other faculty comes in to help make up the final conclusion; and there can be no large and worthy art if the intellectual faculties, as well as the moral and religious, do not have part in the result. It takes the whole man to produce the best and most perfect art work; and only the whole man, in all his relations, can rightly judge of the worth of that which is thus produced. And just as true is it

that this product of the total nature in man must have the effect of elevating his whole being, and of stimulating into healthy activity every part of his nature, and every faculty he possesses. At the same time, it is not to be overlooked that men with very great gifts in some directions may be almost entirely wanting in others. No man has his faculties in perfect balance and on an equal range of capacity. An acute conscience may be accompanied by a weak intellect. Great business genius may appear in conjunction with an almost total want of religious insight. The poet may have little musical ability, as the painter may be no poet. Great intellectual powers, — especially of the logical, philosophical, and scientific order, — are not usually attended by a corresponding development of sentiment and imagination. Equally true is it that the poet and the musician are seldom endowed with acute logical powers. In making a genius, nature is apt to exhaust her gifts on one or two faculties, leaving the others as in ordinary men If Ruskin intends to say that the genius is always a man of moral power, he greatly errs; for artistic gifts of the very highest order may be joined to moral qualities of the weakest kind. Turner was the greatest and most

original of landscape painters; but many a man of the most commonplace intellectual gifts has a keener appreciation than he had of what is moral in thought and right in conduct. Yet it is also true that on the beholder the effect is commanding and life-giving in proportion to the moral rightness which appears in a work of art. The man wanting in moral insight is a defective man, and the expression of his life in every direction will partake of this limitation. However great his art, whatever the beauty with which it is touched, it will be imperfect as his own life is imperfect. Logic is not necessary to great art; but a quality of wholeness and soundness, which we call morality, is in the highest degree required. Morality is not so much a special faculty or gift in man as the rightness and healthiness of all the faculties; and as such it is necessary to that natural tone of joy and delight in the beauties and the truths of nature which art should give.

This power of showing the moral element in life and experience is one of the highest merits of Ruskin as a teacher. He is never a mere moralist, he never puts forth conscience by itself, and never assumes duty to be the only object and worth in life. He clothes all subjects, even beauty

and the affections, with an element of truth and duty, showing how they are related to other human interests and to the health of the whole man.

True and excellent as Ruskin usually is as a critic, he many times presses his zeal too far, and carries his theories beyond the limits of truth. He makes the moral aim in art too prominent, and insists too strongly that the artist must be a man of pure conduct and character in order to the accomplishment of great work. He is also too uncompromising a realist in his theory of the relations of art to nature. It is against lawless and fanciful work, however, that he directs his criticism in behalf of realism, rather than against work that is thoughtful and spiritual in aim. Copying nature he detests as much as any one can, and he pronounces it not to be art. Art does not violate nature either by pretence of knowing more than she does or by foulness of aim and method. The best antidote to that realism which presents the gross and the licentious under the name of art is the pure and healthy realism of Ruskin. With him, to be true to nature does not mean to be impure and vile. He may adopt too often the moralist's point of view; but he is never didactic and puritanic. He believes that at the heart nature is

as pure as she is lovely, as chaste as she is truthful. If this attitude of mind made him less devoted to art and beauty, we should be suspicious of it; but it never does.

His demand for truth in art may be carried too far. It is a matter of no great importance that Raphael clothes the Apostles in the garb of the Greek philosophers; the main matter is that he gives them the character of apostles, bearing the infinite hopes of the Gospel in their faces. Shakspere's wondrous insight into character is not one whit less true to human nature because he makes Bohemia a maritime country, and introduces Christian burial into pagan times. The utmost faithfulness to external details does in no degree atone for lack of inward truth in art. We demand that the artist shall interpret for us the soul of nature; and we ask of him the capacity to arouse in us those feelings and aspirations which nature herself produces, but transformed by those which belong to man and his higher life. Given these results, all else is of little importance; for this is what art must mean to all who love it in a truly loyal spirit. It is only in words, however, that Ruskin carries his realism beyond the true mark; for he is himself an idealist in philosophy as well as in the

outcome of his theory of art. He estimates the worth of any artist's work by its power of awakening thought, as well as by its faithfulness to nature. It is feeling and thought which add the artistic element to nature; for the soul in man, as he wisely says, is the only true artist. The law of all poetic and artistic creation he has defined in words which show him at his best as a critic: "Art is valuable or otherwise only as it expresses the personality, activity, and living perception of a good and great soul; it may express and contain this with little help from execution, and less from science; and if it have not this, if it show not the vigor, perception, and invention of a mighty human spirit, it is worthless, — worthless, I mean, as art; it may be precious in some other way, but as art it is nugatory. Once let this be well understood among us, and magnificent consequences will follow. Let me repeat it in other terms, so that I may not be misunderstood. All art is great and good and true only so far as it is distinctively the work of manhood in its entire and highest sense; that is to say, not the work of limbs and fingers, but of soul."

Ruskin's work has included an exposition of the æsthetic faculty in man, an interpretation of the

beautiful in nature, a philosophy of the relations of the two to each other, the history and the laws of art as he has understood them, and the relations of art to the other elements of human life. It is this broadly comprehensive treatment of the whole subject which gives so much value to his work, and which places it high above any merely critical exposition. This enables him to look at art in the highest and most genuine spirit of idealism, as an attempt to bring out the meaning of nature, and to interpret its spiritual element. Nature is informed with a soul; and to see in it only the relations of space, light, shadow, form, and color, is to see it as it is not. To see the spiritual clearly, to appreciate its influence alike on nature and man, is essential to the broadest and the truest estimate of art. Ruskin has seen it, been inspired by it, and holds all art up to the light of its law. This subtle, transforming, spiritualizing phase of art he recognizes as of supreme importance. If a realist, it is because he sees in nature a Divine Life, and because he believes God has made nature a witness of himself.

In dealing with nature we are dealing with eternal truth, with that which God designed for our health, growth, joy, education, and correction.

The more truly we come into harmony with it, the nearer we are to God, and the nearer will our lives come to that of which they are capable. Its beauty is a spiritual element rather than a material; and it cheers, uplifts, and consoles man by its presence around him, and its ministry to his spirit. Ruskin's teaching of this kind is almost identical with that of Wordsworth, though less pantheistic, and with a greater recognition of universal beauty. He has more of impassioned feeling than Wordsworth had, a keener eye for the subtle effects of cloud and sea; but in the main drift of his thought he has been working with the poet to accomplish the same grand results. It was the original genius of Turner, a genius of the highest order, which at first attracted his attention, gave direction and purpose to his thoughts as a young man, and made him see in nature that vision of eternal reality which it is the mission of true art to interpret. That youthful championship is one that will remain memorable in the history of literature and art. It has given a leading purpose to Ruskin's life, and to his studies in history, art, literature, and political economy. His early success as an artist proves that he has not been a mere critic of art,

but that he has written out of ample knowledge. A long-cherished purpose of devoting himself to science, which he expressed to Miss Mitford, indicates that his studies of nature have had a genuine foundation in his own mind. He has often declared his interest in man's social relations to be deeper than any other, and his studies in that direction prove him a thoughtful and sympathetic lover of his race. It is this breadth of view which marks the art criticism of Ruskin, and it enables him to speak of art in the light of every human interest. To the artist this breadth of view may give a result too general and too unprofessional to be fully acceptable; but for the student of nature and man it is of the highest value. It is for the sake of his unity and comprehensiveness of view that the lover of high thought will turn to Ruskin. Life ceases to be narrow, conventional, and sectarian under his teaching. The puritan hatred of art, and the renascence love of sensuality have alike disappeared; and we have come to a balanced estimate and appreciation of what life is in its manifold manifestations.

VI.

Ruskin is possessed of ardent feelings and intense sympathies. His heart is warm and glowing, and his affections strong. To help others is to him a delight, and it is one of the noblest objects life offers him. He feels with the poor, takes their sorrows and burdens to his own heart, and has for them whatever of sympathy man can give to man.

Great as has been Ruskin's interest in art, his interest in subjects connected with political economy and social science has been in some respects even greater. In this field he has also taken the character of a reformer, giving his time and his money most freely to the furtherance of the ideas and the practical results in which he has believed. In his "Political Economy of Art," "Unto This Last," "Munera Pulveris," "Time and Tide," and "Crown of Wild Olives" he has set forth his radical remedies for the social

evils of the world. These do not lie in the direction of communism, but in that of the "Christian Socialism" which Kingsley and Maurice advocated with so much zeal forty years ago. Very often it occurs that an author does not know which part of his work is of the most importance; and so we find Ruskin passing by his writings which the world most values now, and is likely to prize the highest in the future, to claim for his essays on political economy a merit which does not belong to them. He has said of one series of these essays, that they contained better work than most of his former writings, and more important truths than all of them put together.

Ruskin writes on these subjects rather as a moralist than as a scientific investigator, and he is guided by his affections rather than by his reason. He is little interested in those laws of production and distribution with which the political economists are mainly concerned, and he believes that there is something of greater importance in the social relations of men than value and price, wages and profits, rent and interest, taxation and credit, commodities and capital. About these things he cares very little, and yet

he cares very much about the men and women and children who are affected by them through all the interests of their lives. Ruskin is concerned for the people who are affected by want and ignorance; and he wishes to do what will make them happier and better. The result is that he attacks many things commonly regarded as right, and he proposes an order of society very different from that now existing.

It is easy to see why his theories have not been acceptable to most of his readers. His rejection of the principles of political economy is enough in itself to lead to distrust of what he may have to say. He goes farther, however, and attacks usury, defines money to be simply a documentary expression of legal claim, needing no basis in intrinsic value, demands a complete recognition of the radical claims of the working-men, and would have luxury and great riches forbidden by the state. Especially does he attack the theory of demand and supply, claiming that the duties and the sympathies of men annul such a law, and make it void. In this, as in his other social theories, he is too much a sentimentalist, even if he is always interesting and suggestive. His heart is in the right place, however, and he

gives to sentiment and sympathy their just recognition.

He is entirely right in repudiating the inflexible laws set up by the teachers of political economy, in behalf of sympathy and a humane spirit. If nature is stern, man need not therefore be inhuman. The political economists write as if man were nothing more than a part of material nature, as if he had no feelings and were incapable of suffering. Ruskin would have them turn about, see what the social problems are as they affect man, and then direct their teachings to his succor and improvement. He relies so much on sentiment, and on the promptings of a kind heart, that he does not always rightly estimate the facts and the laws which political economy presents. To man he thinks is given a better way than that of science, the way of love and helpfulness. No one insists on this better way, or preaches the law of it, which is the law of love, more zealously and sympathetically than he. He is the apostle of affection almost as distinctly as he is the apostle of beauty. He has the right to be the apostle of both, for the two blend into and interpret each other.

Ruskin has adopted the Christian theory of human society in opposition to that of science.

Political economy regards man as subjected to the stern laws of nature, and science has claimed that the natural state of man is that of competition. The fittest survives, but through warfare of the strong on the weak. Ruskin says this is not the higher law, not the true theory of human society. Surely it is not what the higher spirit of love would dictate. In man as a moral being the law of antagonism and competition ceases, and the law of love and sympathy takes its place.

Whether his theories are right or wrong, Ruskin has been truly in earnest in his sympathies with the people. He has given much money, and in later years the better part of his life, to the elevation of the working classes. In 1871 he founded "St. George's Guild," with the object of improving waste land, developing education and culture among those devoted to agricultural pursuits, and helping the industrious poor to better their condition in life. All of Ruskin's projects of this kind are too theoretical and chimerical; good in their way, and founded on the noblest and most humane purpose, but incapable of realization in any large and influential manner.

It would not be possible for Ruskin to look at life in the manner of the men of science. His

sympathies run too deep and strong for that; he is too much the lover and the poet, and his sentiments are too impassioned and imperative. Much that the scientists have been doing he cares not for, and he even treats with contempt. It is well that such men as he should be born into the world from time to time, to redeem it from selfishness, and to give it the lift of ideal aims. Devoid of imagination, the men of science look only at facts and laws; devoid of feeling, they forget that men suffer and die. Gifted in the highest measure with both feeling and imagination, Ruskin realizes the depravity, the ignorance, and the poverty which beset men, and he enters into their joys and woes as if they were his own. That he is in the wrong in his speculative opinions might have been anticipated of the artist and the poet; but the worth of Ruskin's studies in social science consists in their attitude of sympathy and in their richness of human affection. It would seem as if when his head was the most wrong his heart was the most right. He attacks science because it is hard and inhuman, and because it has no concern for beauty and affection. He attacks political economy because it knows man only as

the victim of inflexible laws, only as the puppet that dances to show what the laws are. He is more concerned for the puppets than for the wires on which they dance, more for men than for the world in which they live.

In art Ruskin is an original critic, but in political economy his theories are determined by the backward looking tendencies of his mind. That which makes him a great art critic also makes him a social fanatic. Having been influenced by the counter-revolution, he abhors democracy and all which grows out of personal and political liberty. With Carlyle, he would have men ruled by the "strong man," who by his genius or his God-given powers, as Ruskin thinks, is alone among men entitled to rule over his fellows. Much as he is interested in the welfare of the working-men, he does not desire the ballot for them. It is in the extension of the ballot that he finds the cause of the evil days which have come on the laboring classes. The working-man is given the franchise, and then told to stand on his own feet, defend his own interests, and protect his own rights. In saying this, doubtless Ruskin is right in some degree ; for the weak and ignorant are thus left to contend feebly against

the hard and cruel world. Ruskin believes in paternal goverment, where the king and the lord are the protectors and the guides of those under them. Whatever of social anarchy is in the world to-day, and whatever of evil has come to the working-men, he believes to be the result of the abandonment of paternal government or government by the men ordained of heaven by their genius for the guidance and protection of others. It is true that in England the position of the laborer has been degraded with the advancement of constitutional government; but the cause is to be sought in the presence of paternalism rather than in the growth of democracy. He who is protected by the strong arm of another always remains a serf. Nothing develops men so much as self-reliance, and that is never to be fostered under any form of paternalism in government.

In his social theories Ruskin is sadly in the wrong. In the democracy he so strongly condemns is the only remedy for many of the social ills against which he contends. His own remedies seem ridiculous compared with the magnitude of the evils as he describes them. His "St. George's Guild," his museum, his planting of waste land, and his "Fors Clavigera" seem like

the old woman's broom with which she would sweep back the ocean. They are but petty triflings with a mighty problem, which Ruskin approaches with theories wholly wrong and by methods inadequate. The man who seeks to aid the poor by publishing a periodical for them at a price three times that which it would ordinarily command must be regarded as in some degree a visionary. In whatever favorable light we may look at his work of this kind, it must be pronounced chimerical. His purpose may be of the best, but that does not save him from embracing social theories which are erroneous.

It is not a strong man to guide and protect them which the working-men need, but just laws and an adequate protection of their rights as laborers. It is not the taking away of usury which is to give the laborers their rights or bring to them plenty and happiness. That which Ruskin would bring to men in the way of social order will never come to them again, simply because the revolutionary era is between us and the ages of paternalism, and because paternalism cannot help men out of the real difficulties with which they are obliged to contend. The world goes forward, and the time of feudalism cannot be reproduced,

whatever advantages it may have had over the present. Democracy must now have its day; and out of it will grow something better and truer, if men will deal with it in the spirit of hope and faith.

The feudal idea, in practice, does not give the reins of government into the hands of the wisest and best, except by chance. There is no way of bringing the fittest men to the front so effectual as that of democracy, where all have a free opportunity, and where the man with force and power can at once make his genius felt. Unfortunately for such a theory as Ruskin's, genius of any kind never confines itself to the aristocracy or to the privileged orders or even to the cultured classes. It is well enough that boys should be under a schoolmaster, but men should be self-reliant and capable of their own guidance.

Ruskin's love of the picturesque has misled him in regard to the true character of feudalism. It was gorgeous in splendor, and it was knightly in temper; but baseness and corruption were underneath it all. It secured a strong government at the expense of all that is truly for the good of the people. It degraded the laborer that the knight might shine. It made quiet homes,

dotting everywhere the land, impossible, that the castle might stand forth stately and frowning. It elevated the baron, but it made the people serfs. It destroyed individual responsibility and effort, and it made the people cringing cowards.

There is no need that feudalism should be brought back to us, or that the aristocratic class should be retained. The strong should guard the interests of the weak, for the sake of humanity. The poor do not need coddling, but they should be made to feel that they are men, and they should have a free opportunity for action. Real alienation of classes comes by the method Ruskin proposes, and not because of the growth of democracy. The repression fostered by feudalism has set class against class, and it has made liberty a name for violence. The temper of men's minds has so changed that any attempt to set class over class, whether it be on the basis of birth, wealth, or genius, is at once, and justly, the signal for rebellion. It is only by the development of the individual that the race is now to be advanced. Class cannot be made to yield obedience to class, or one individual to another, except by the aid of the spirit of sympathy and mutual helpfulness. It is

not paternalism men now need, but brotherhood; not a Napoleon or a Bismarck, but a Washington and a Bright.

It is for sympathy and helpfulness Ruskin asks; but always with the assumption that the working-man needs to be under the lead of some one wiser than himself. It is an assumption which is false from first to last, and which marks his theory as sadly impracticable. The social classes owe much to each other in the way of mutual confidence and helpfulness; but nothing is to be gained by assuming that one is superior to another. The wise man may teach the ignorant, but he has no right to command him.

The purpose with which Ruskin writes on social subjects is always good; but his sympathy with mediævalism is the source of much error of opinion. All social changes are attended with evil results, as well as good ones; and the growth of individualism has fostered its own vices and defects. No social state yet attained has answered to the demands of the ideal; but democracy has in it all the promise of the future.

As in the case of Rousseau, there is much in Ruskin which is right and very noble. He is too much a sentimentalist, however, to see the world

as it is or to deal with it in the spirit of rational reform. The nobility of his heart appears in all his theories, as well as in his anxious desire to make better the world for his fellows, who find it hard to deal with. Men will turn to him, as to Rousseau, for inspiration, but not for guidance and instruction. They will take counsel of his heart, but not of his head. They will listen to him as a prophet, but not as a law-maker and statesman. Though they accept not his theories, it will be well if they acquire his love and sympathy in their fulness.

Every poet and artist is to be judged by that in which he has done the best, by that which has commanded the truest aspirations of his mind and the deepest affections of his heart. The test of the genius of such a man as Ruskin is not to be found in his errors about science, but in his rightness of heart for humanity, and in his faithfulness of eye for beauty. Some men give us the truth in abstract forms, as if it had no relation to us or ours. As they speak of it, it would seem to belong to the Medes and Persians or to the inhabitants of Saturn, but not to anybody we have ever met in the streets, or had our hearts warmed to in the intercourse of life. There are others,

with less knowledge of truth, it may be, who make it alive, give it meaning for us, relate it to our needs, rouse us to perceive it, and draw us into its love. Ruskin belongs to those who make the laws alive for us. He is one of the world's prophets and inspirers, who quicken us to better deeds, who start in us the deeper tides of faith. Even more truly, he may be called one of the world's lovers, rejoicing in all beauty, delighting in all affection. His heart is ever warm, his sympathy glowing and tender. Whatever his errors of opinion, whatever his failures in speculation, such a man makes the world better by his presence, and richer for his ministry to its higher life. His truth is of the spirit and not of the letter.

VII.

Ruskin is intensely religious, steadfastly of a believing mind. The doubts of the time have affected him less than any other great writer; he retains much of the simplicity and conviction of his youth. In his early writings he was evangelical in belief, accepting the Bible with sincere trust. The harsher doctrines of the evangelical creed never were received by him, for he has not in any of his writings looked at man or nature as alienated from God. In his later books he has shown a less hearty belief in the creed of his childhood, and he has manifested sympathy with the broader faith of his time. At no time, however, has he been under the influence of theology or doctrinal statements of faith. His is the religion of the spirit, of one who sincerely loves worship and praise, and whose soul is entranced by the visions of the Eternal. He revolts against a formal and perfunctory faith, as against conven-

tionalism in art, or unfeeling laws in political economy.

His religion has been more simple and confiding than Browning's, more vigorous and emphatic than Tennyson's, more restful and trusting than Carlyle's. It has seemed easier for him to believe than for any other man of genius since Wordsworth. He has the poet's childlike sincerity, wedded to his spirit of faithful interpretation. He believes broadly, with the generosity of a richly gifted nature, with enthusiasm and intense desire. He will not cramp his faith within the old limits, or deny to it the power to work without bonds and bounds. He believes that God was in the old times, but just as much he believes that God is in the life of all things now.

Ruskin has been as trusting and believing towards the higher truths of religion as he has been towards the truths of man, nature, and art. To him, religion has not been a matter of form and tradition, but a living fact in man's relations to the Eternal, and a joyous acceptance of the divine law of love. Beauty of nature and delight of pure human conduct are alike manifestations of God, in his view. Sympathy with nature, when pure and elevated, and joy in the human

faculties, when life is loyal and loving, are truly religious and worshipful.

Ruskin has held the doctrine of God's immanence in connection with faith in the Bible miracles. He believes that God manifests himself, not as unbroken law, but as advancing and immeasurable life. To him, life is not for probation in the theological sense, but for education; not to prepare us for heaven, but to give us culture in the higher disciplines of the soul. Our highest task is to make ourselves true men and women, to serve God by being loyal to the life he has given us here. We are to make the earth a fit dwelling-place for God's children, and deal with them righteously and in a brotherly spirit; otherwise, all prayer and all worship are in vain.

Holding to the Christian faith with a devout conviction, and as one who believes implicitly in its Heavenly Father, Ruskin has nothing of what Coleridge called "other-worldliness." He sees God in flowers and clouds and flaming sun, and in the faces of men. God dwells here, too; this earth is his shekinah, and this hour his eternity. Whatever men do that is loyal and true, in that they serve God. "All great art is praise," he

says. The men who have painted the greatest pictures, those with soul and power in them, have done it on bended knees. In that spirit all men have worked, in whatever direction, who have done what it is most worthy to perform, and what will last through the time to come as still enduringly good for mankind. Not that Ruskin believes in a formal and sanctimonious utterance of words, in some perfunctory manner, as the prayer and praise that is true worship. The man who feels himself mastered by a spirit he cannot and would not resist, a spirit that leads him to do his work with utter unconcern for all other results than that it shall be done truly and as best he can; and who feels that in so working he is going forth with God to create anew the face of the earth in beauty, peace, and righteousness, he it is whose work is worship. Such work has greatness and glory in it; it affects men with power and peace, it widens the trend of men's actions, and gives to their thoughts a more loyal cast. True living is true worship, Ruskin teaches; the living that is daily adoration in word, thought, and deed, and brings its action up to the ways and manners of the skies. The angels he believes in, however, are those who dwell in the habitations of men,

and may be seen any day on their errands of mercy and faith.

Ruskin is a critic of religion as well as of literature and art; and he sees little good in that of the present time. He finds it shallow, unbelieving, and devoid of true spiritual insight. It covets material prosperity, it delights in the semblance of worship, at heart it is full of doubt and denial. Compared with his own sincere and unswerving faith, the religion of the time is feverish with unrest and melancholy with a distempered spirit. Ruskin does not recognize, as he ought, however, that ours is a time of search and inquiry; that some ages, of which ours is one, are as John the Baptist wandering in the wilderness, unclothed of conventionalities, and feeding on the locusts and wild honey of nature, awaiting the advent of that new Master who is to bring in the fairer faith and the worthier worship. In the meantime, the great body of men are content with forms and feasts, with the shows of worship, and the buying and selling at the temple door. Ruskin will not be patient with cant, with piety that is for the sake of loaves and fishes, or with religious teaching that makes a pretence of authority, but shows not the fruits of the Spirit

in love of the poor and in the healing of the heart's wounds. Faith measures itself by conduct and by the humility of lowly service. If it scorns the meanest of men, if it sets up any claim of authority except that of heart over heart, it has ceased to be faith.

No other religious teacher of this century has taught more that is wholesomely inspiring and intrinsically religious. He cannot rightly be compared with any religious teacher contemporary with him, but rather with such men as Hooker, Cudworth, and Jeremy Taylor. Freely as he has accepted Carlyle as his master, his spirit is too latitudinarian and too sympathetic to be drawn away of Carlyle's semi-Calvinism. God revealed in the strong man, a doctrine so satisfactory to Carlyle, Ruskin finds also to have its elements of truth. He sees God not in power alone, but in beauty, love, and truth even more. He is no Calvinist of any type; he cannot believe that God is far removed in nature and in love from man, and will not believe that God is to save only a selected few. Carlyle has too far influenced him in his criticisms of the present time, and in his thought that religion has now suffered an eclipse. But the

currents of his faith run too deep and broad for any real lapse of it, or for any pessimism that sees the world abandoned of God. No, God is the life and light of all this world of beauty, truth, and love; his sunshine is ever on and about it; his spirit sustains and retains it, keeping it embosomed in reality. Its beauty shines out of his face; its truth is the substance of his nature; its love is the unfathomable depth of his heart's sympathy. Ruskin has not Tennyson's questioning spirit or his attitude of doubt. He is religious by intuition, by every pure purpose in his nature, and by the largest conclusions of his mind. If there is more faith in honest doubt than in half the creeds, it is a truth which has not been made known to him, and which he cannot accept. Science has not disturbed his faith as it has Tennyson's, or found in him so ready an acceptance of its doctrines. The evidence it offers is of a kind which he does not appreciate, and for which he has little capacity. Perhaps he has never made a wide-searching inquiry into the foundations of religious truth; and the whole trend of his mind is such that he is not disturbed by philosophical skepticism. He is too much a dogmatist to be overcome by any of that distrust

which besets less positive natures, and which causes them to ask if their neighbor's creed may not be as good as theirs. If he has grown more tolerant with advancing years, he has not grown less positive.

Browning is of closer kin to Ruskin in his religious attitude of mind than any other English author of the time. Ruskin believes through the moral nature, Browning through the intellectual. Browning finds in religion the grand consummation of his philosophy, Ruskin the unfailing confirmation of his ethics. Both alike accept the Christian faith with thorough conviction, not as a dogma and not as a tradition, but as a union of man's soul with the Infinite One in the sacrament of life. To them revelation is universal and unfailing, not exceptional and arbitrary. It is the never-ceasing activity of God, by which his nature consummates itself in the communion of rational beings. Ruskin has the more clearly penetrated the revelation made through nature; Browning, that made through the instincts and experiences of individual men. For Ruskin, the aim of religious development is the perfection of men in the common fellowship of love and right doing; for Browning, life flowers and fruits in the instincts

and insights of exceptional souls. The age and the country producing two such prophets of the higher faith can have suffered no real eclipse of religion.

And yet the religion of the nineteenth century has become too rationalistic, too introspective, and too anxious for demonstration. In its demand for reasons, it has undermined the holy of holies; in its craving for proof satisfactory to science, it has smitten the soul with a withering blight. Beauty is not seen through the aid of a treatise on æsthetics; and faith does not live within the soul because we accept this demonstration or that. To all free and healthy natures religion comes surely and soundly, answering to an unfailing want, an imperative demand. Ruskin has done something to make us see it as a morning freshness and a noontide light, as health of heart and mind, and as right relations of man to man. We see God by living, and not by reasoning. We live by worship and righteousness, by rejoicing in all things which God has made to be, and by inward harmony with nature and man. All great living is praise. Religion is rightness of being; worship is wholeness of nature. To love God is to love all pure things and thoughts the world contains;

to serve him is to serve all his creatures great and small. To define God, the three words life, light, and love alone are needed.

Had Ruskin practised more of concentration, it would have been better for his works and for his reputation. He has written so much that but few persons, in these days of many books, can afford to read him as a whole. His books must undergo a sifting, and a few only can live. Even now, the "Modern Painters," "Stones of Venice," and "Seven Lamps of Architecture" represent Ruskin to the reading world, though they do not contain his best or most matured thought.

The majority of readers will take Ruskin in bits. They will find here and there in his pages that which they can love, which appeals to them as do few other printed pages, and these paragraphs they will cherish fondly and read often. The general reader, even among persons of culture, knows little of art in that intimate way in which Ruskin has written of it, and cannot rightly enjoy his criticisms of this kind. His chapters on morals and on religion, and on the beauties of

nature, will be read with ever-increasing appreciation and delight. Could they be selected from the body of his works and brought together in a compact and systematic form, they would make a far deeper impression on the world than they do now. This it might not be best to do, for then the reader would fail to realize, as Ruskin has taught, the intimate relations, and constant sustaining power in mutual help, of art, morals, religion, nature, and man.

Like Coleridge and like Rousseau, Ruskin will have an influence on the course of thought and sentiment not at all to be measured by the number of his readers or by the general acceptance of his theories. He is an inspirer of thought rather than a great thinker, creating a tendency and an atmosphere which shall have infused themselves throughout human culture. Others will repeat his ideas in new forms, impress them on fresh lines of research, apply them to other subjects of pressing interest, until his thought about art shall have pervaded the growing life of the world. In reality this is the highest fame and the most enduring success, to have silently affected the deeper issues of thought and conduct.

IV.

BROWNING.

THE strength of poetry is in its thought, not in its form ; and with great lyrists, their music is always secondary, and their substance of saying, primary, — so much so, that they will even daringly and wilfully leave a syllable or two rough, or even mean, and avoid a perfect rhythm or sweetness, rather than let the reader's mind be drawn away to lean too definitely on sound. — *Ruskin.*

IF there is any great quality more perceptible than another in Mr. Browning's intellect, it is his decisive and incisive faculty of thought, his sureness and intensity of perception, his rapid and trenchant resolution of aim. To charge him with *obscurity* is about as accurate as to call Lynceus purblind, or complain of the slowness of the telegraph wire. He is something too much the reverse of obscure ; he is too brilliant and subtle for the ready reader of a ready writer to follow with any certainty the track of intelligence which moves with such incessant rapidity. — *Swinburne.*

IT is full of genius, natural and great thoughts, profound and yet simple, and yet beautiful in its vigor. I know nothing that is so affecting, nothing in any book I have ever read, as Mildred's recurrence to that "I was so young — I had no mother." I know no love like it, no passion like it, no moulding of a splendid thing after its conception like it. — *Dickens.*

I LOOK up to Browning as one of the very few men known to me by their works who, with most cordial energy and invincible resolution, have lived thoroughly throughout the whole of their being, to the uttermost verge of all their capacities, in his case truly colossal ; lived and wrought thoroughly in sense and soul and intellect. — *James Thompson.*

THAN whom a mightier master never
Touch'd the deep chords of hidden things;
Nor error did from truth dissever
With keener glance; nor make endeavor
To rise on bolder wings
In those high regions of the soul
Where Thought itself grows dim with awe.

— *Owen Meredith.*

IV.

BROWNING.

WHENEVER there is a growth of idealism, literature feels the new life which it creates. Most of the great literary periods have been associated with a revival of this philosophy in some one of its many forms. There are an impulse, an energy, and a largeness of conception in what it has to teach, and in the life it produces, which are conducive to literary creation. Whatever its limitations, it affects the imagination and the emotions, gives the largest conceptions of nature and man, and kindles the soul with the fire of renewing life.

Idealism is the philosophy of hope and of the future. It clings not to the low earth, but embraces the circle of the heavens. Thought it raises to the place of supreme arbiter in the realm of human experience. It gives the imagination objects worthy of its creative vision, and it lifts

the whole mind with an exalted sense of its relations to Absolute Being.

It is not fancy, but reality, in which idealism finds its life and its reason for being. It creates a love of nature, it awakens the spirit of humanity, and it draws man into ardent sympathy with the world about him. Wherever the idealist goes there are voices to be heard chanting the glory and the beauty of creation. He finds everywhere a life responsive to his own, that reveals to him truth and accords to him peace.

The idealist is the only true realist. He it is who takes the world as an actuality, and who stands before it with reverence and awe, because of the life made known in every leaf and star and man. He reads nature with the whole of his mind, and all the pages of her book are bound together into one work for his delight. He does not accept this and reject that, but he peruses all her truths in search of the light which he is sure they contain for him.

Literature has gained from the idealist its joy, its beauty, and its fragrance. When it glows with eternal freshness and vigor there his hand is seen and the throbbing of his heart is felt. He it is who interprets the ideas after which the creative

process proceeds, making it live anew in poem, essay, or romance.

The revival of idealism in Germany, in the middle of the eighteenth century, had a remarkable influence on English literature. It gave us Wordsworth and Coleridge in the place of Pope and Gray. It brought nature, imagination, feeling, and the real world into literature. It gave to the real world a capacity to touch men with its freshness, beauty, and living significance. There came with it a conviction that, if we come into true sympathy with the natural world, we stand face to face with what is real. All worlds are in fact one. They are unified by an immeasurable and inexhaustible life flowing through them all. They therefore reflect, and supplement, and interpret one another. The world of matter is a vision of the world of mind. When we have solved the problem of human thought we have discovered the nature of God.

Three men whose names occupy conspicuous places in recent English literature have represented the later effects of German idealism. These are Carlyle, Emerson, and Browning, idealists all, but in a manner to bring out the emphatic individuality which they each exhibited. Their

marked individuality and independent spirit, the result in no small measure of their idealism, are shown on every page which they have written. In this group of men Carlyle is the greatest genius, Emerson the noblest personality, and Browning the most original interpreter of life.

Carlyle deals with history in its largest relations and purposes; Browning with the individual man as a soul distinct and unique, and Emerson with the moral law as applied alike to individuals and nations. The first exalts intellect and force, the second feeling and spiritual insight, the third conscience and intuition. Browning has the least of doubt, Emerson the least of practical sense, and Carlyle the least of moral stability. Emerson writes meditations concerning the ethical life, Browning soliloquizes of the individual soul as subjected to life's manifold experiences, and Carlyle rhapsodizes about the epical movements of mankind. In Carlyle the great characteristic is strength, in Emerson sweetness, and in Browning light. It is Emerson we love, Browning we accept as a master, and Carlyle we reverence for his genius.

To these men idealism came as a creative impulse, enlarging their thoughts, giving new

energy to imagination, and making life seem to them something grand and sacred. It made them eager students of the world about them, and it made them feel that in sympathy with it their own lives were exalted and made worthy of the priesthood of letters. They spoke out of a deep and sincere purpose, not only to the pleasing, but to the edification of men. They had no mood in which they desired to toy with life or to paint it in gaudy colors. They were sincere, eager to know the truth, and lovers of their fellows.

It was the secret of life these men sought. They were not troubadours, but pilgrims. They came not to sing a song or to twang a harp, but to chant the measure of life's hymn. It was what they spoke, and not how, which concerned them. With a great thought enrapturing heart and mind, they spoke as men burdened with it, anxious only that the message they bore might be heard of men.

These men were alike in this, that they were prophets more than artists. With one accord they counted it unworthy that life should have no higher than the artist's aim. They spoke because of what they had to say, and not for the sake of the manner of the saying. Whatever art they

made use of was the result of their faith in the message they delivered. Obscure they were, and difficult to read with ease and pleasure, because they dealt with life at first hand. A style involved and intricate they fell into without purpose, because they were not stylists, and because they would unburden the mind of "thoughts too deep for words." There is no lack of force and fire, no want of beauty and breadth, in what they have written. In their want of art is an art full of power and majesty. It is the sea in its glory, the storm in its might, the mountain in its towering splendor, the heavens in their unutterable depths, which made the style of these men; they came in close contact with nature's beauty and sublimity. Their style has caught the grace of life and death, of pain and sorrow, of joy and high thoughts, and of all that ushers in the worth and the wonder of man's being.

These men have written books of the soul. Their books are heart confessions and revelations of the mind. What they lived we know from what they have written. It was no idle word they spoke, but what they had seen, heard, and felt. When we read the books of either of these men, we feel we sit at the feet of a master, who

knows whereof he speaks. They speak with the words of one who has had all a man's experience. In their books we learn to know ourselves; there we come face to face with our own souls.

Of these men one only yet remains. In an age when on every wind comes borne the cry of realism, he remains faithful to the spirit of idealism. He finds the soul to be that which transcends all other facts and laws. To him it is the one supreme fact. That is the one phenomenon he desires to study. To an investigation of it, in all its many phases, he has devoted his life. He has been as eager to look into the history of a soul as the scientist is to investigate the history of a star or an earth-worm. He has felt that the individual man is worth more than any other fact or law, that he is the one unique phenomenon the world presents, and that he alone gives the inquirer an adequate object of thought. There are in the soul heights, and depths, and glories, and expanses of out-reaching mystery, which Browning has seen with eyes wonder-set and a mind zealous to know the truth.

Browning has exerted an influence on literature as fresh and suggestive as that of Carlyle or Emerson. He has the same unique power, he has

the same subtle gift of insight, and he has the same intensity of conviction which those men possessed. He is an original force in literature, never an imitator, but one to arouse and to stimulate all who come after him. He stands apart by himself as a poet. He had no forerunner, and he is likely to have no successor.

The last of the men directly affected by the incoming of German idealism, Browning has suffered nothing of its better spirit to be lost. To him it has given the same deep-searching sense of the wonder of life as to those who went before him. He, too, has been environed by mystery and an infinite life. The world has revealed itself to him with a freshness as of spring, and with a joy as of flowers blooming on sunny slopes.

I.

Browning's father was a man of scholarly tastes, a lover of poetry, and a maker of verses. The poet's education was received almost wholly at home and in Continental travel. He went early to Italy, spent a long time there as a young man, studied thoroughly its history, institutions, and art products, and mingled with all classes of the people.

Browning began as a child to write verses, though this may be said of almost every poet. At the age of twelve he had poetry enough written to make a volume, which was read by the Misses Flower, friends of his family, the younger of whom was afterwards known as Sarah Flower Adams. These sisters saw the promise there was in the boy, and the older of them sent his poems to William Johnson Fox, who was kind enough not to print them, but praised them heartily.

These first poems were written under the influence of Byron, and Fox feared that the young poet's love of melody and form would be a serious hindrance to genuine accomplishment. He was not destined, however, to be led astray by the music of fair words.

At the age of thirteen chance threw in his way some of the writings of Shelley, and new poetic ardor and capacity were aroused in the young poet. After a long search, and many inquiries of booksellers, all the poems of Shelley were found, with one exception then in their first edition; and with these were bought three small volumes by John Keats, then also unread by lovers of poetry. These books were eagerly read, and they worked a "change into something new and strange," as they took hold of the mind of this ardent lad. His old work became distasteful, while many and vast poetic projects began to exercise his genius. Not Byron, and not Shelley, was destined to be his poetic master, for he was to make a path of his own in poetry, and to work in a manner strikingly personal and original.

At the age of twenty, Browning produced his "Pauline: A Fragment of a Confession," which was printed for him by one of the members of his

family. He afterwards wished to forget it, declaring it to have been written in pursuance of a foolish plan he had forgotten or had no wish to remember. It was published anonymously, and only the genuine promise it contained led to its being favorably received by such men as Fox, Mill, and Forster. Miss Flower revealed the authorship to Fox, who reviewed it with generous warmth and appreciation. He said it gave him the thrill, and laid hold of him with the power, the sensation of which had never yet failed him as a test of genius in the writer capable of producing it. In after years Dante Rossetti found the poem in the British Museum and copied all its pages, so much was he impressed by it.

At the age of twenty-three, Browning produced his "Paracelsus," which gave Harriet Martineau an "unbounded expectation" of the poet's genius. Its conception was novel, and its execution displayed many beauties. It did not attract much attention, but it caused Macready to suggest to Browning the production of a drama. This led the poet to the writing of those works in which he has made the nearest approach to the power of the old dramatists which English literature has shown in a century. His plays were produced

on the stage with a fair degree of success, but from various causes they were soon removed.

Browning won the approbation of several of the best critics by his earlier poems, but he was not read beyond a small circle of thoughtful persons. In 1841 a leading London publisher offered to bring out his poems in a cheap form, similar to that in which he was then issuing the "Elizabethan Dramatists." They accordingly appeared in a series of sixteen-page, double-column pamphlets, eight numbers being published in all. In his preface he says that one of his plays had been applauded by a pitful of good-natured people, and that he hoped the cheap form of the little books would again help him to "a sort of pit-audience." It is to be doubted if he was largely read, however, even in this form, for his poetry has few of the elements of popularity. He gave to his booklets the name of "Bells and Pomegranates," and they contained much of his best poetry.

Soon after the publication of the last of his "Bells and Pomegranates," in 1846, Browning married Elizabeth Barrett, under romantic circumstances. She was already widely known as a poet, and she had long been a confirmed invalid.

Immediately after their marriage they went to Italy. Here they lived for fifteen years, producing poems side by side, until Mrs. Browning's death, in 1861. Their summers were spent in Florence, and their winters in Rome, with an occasional visit to England.

Since the death of his wife Browning has lived in London, devoting himself with zeal and freshness to his poetic work. He has written more in quantity than any other English poet, so prolific has been his genius. Originality and profound thoughtfulness have mainly characterized his poetry. Read only by a few persons, those who come to know him intimately in his writings regard him with devout admiration.* No other poet has been more keenly studied in his lifetime, or has won to himself a more ardent circle of personal disciples.

* Browning's poetry is not more widely read at the present time because of the expensive form in which his works are published. On the whole, the edition of Houghton, Mifflin & Co., in seven volumes, is the best, the cheapest, and the most convenient; but this does not include "Jocoseria" and "Ferishtah's Fancies." It is a pity his works are not to be had in two volumes, at a cost not exceeding three dollars. A one-volume edition, containing all the short poems and dramas, and three or four of the long poems, would greatly help in making Browning known to the reading public.

In person Browning is small, yet firmly built and active. If the portraits of him which have been published do not belie him, he has little of the conventional look of the poet, but rather that of a successful man of business. Bayard Taylor met the poet in London, in 1851, and said he was received with "great cordiality." He also described "his lively, cheerful manner, quick voice, and perfect self-possession," and said that his "dark hair was already streaked with gray about the temples. His complexion was fair, with perhaps the faintest olive tinge, eyes large, clear, and gray, nose strong and well cut, mouth full and rather broad, and chin pointed, though not prominent. His forehead broadened rapidly upwards from the outer angle of the eyes, slightly retreating. The strong individuality which marks his poetry was expressed not only in his face and head, but in his whole demeanor. He was about the medium height, and his movements expressed a combination of vigor and elasticity." In 1858 Hawthorne met Browning several times; and on one occasion he described him as being "very genial and full of life," and said that "his conversation has the effervescent aroma which you cannot catch, even if you get the very words that

seem to be imbued with it." Again he said: "Browning's nonsense is of a very genuine and excellent quality, the true babble and effervescence of a bright and powerful mind; and he lets it play among his friends with the faith and simplicity of a child." "In conversation," said the less genial Harriet Martineau, "no speaker could be more absolutely clear and purpose-like. He was full of good sense and fine feeling, amidst occasional irritability; full, also, of fun and harmless satire, with some little affectations which were as droll as anything he said." Another account of him gives a more sympathetic description of his personal gifts: "Browning's conversation is like the poetry of Chaucer, or like his own simplified and made transparent. His countenance is so full of vigor, freshness, and refined power, that it seems impossible to think that he can ever grow old. His poetry is subtle, passionate, and profound; but he himself is simple, natural, and playful. He has the repose of a man who has lived much in the open air, with no nervous uneasiness, and no unhealthy self-consciousness." Sydney Dobell described the poet as "dark in hair, eyebrow, and luxuriant beard, as a Spaniard or Portuguese, which he very much resembles.

A fine, large, and expansible eye, and a mouth not exactly poetic but wonderful for its facility, arrest you at once."

These descriptions may be taken for what they are worth; for they cannot be supposed to let us into the personality of Browning, nor do they give us a clear understanding of his character. The face of a man, the color of his hair and eyes, and the manner of his speech are not infallible guides to his intellectual and emotional nature. These descriptions are but surface indications at the best, and are mainly of interest as showing the nature of the impression made by the poet on other men of genius. Browning is in his works, which are the only true portrait and description of him we can have; for in them his inmost life is revealed as in the case of few other authors. It is not the physical configuration which we wish to know, though knowing that may give us a superficial satisfaction; but the man as he is in himself, as a thinker, and as an artist. Such an account of him was that given by Landor, who looked into the poet's nature, and made known what was there: —

> "Browning, since Chaucer was alive and hale,
> No man hath walked along our road with step
> So active, so inquiring eye, or tongue
> So varied in discourse."

Not less salient and striking is the portrait drawn by a younger poet, who has seen in Browning his true character as a poet-pilgrim, or one who climbs the mount of song to reach the heavenly city which rests thereon : —

> " Bearded like some strong shipman, with a beam
> Of gray orbs glancing upward at the sky."

The outer man reflects the inner man in this portrait, painted by Robert Buchanan; but Alfred Domett, his long-time and fast friend, looks at him as a bard, and at his special mission as a poet, when he briefly singles Browning out from all the other poets of his time, and calls him the

> " Subtlest assertor of the Soul in song."

Browning is manly and masculine, full of energy and life, and wide-awake to every phase of being about him. He has the tenderness of great and self-sustained strength, and he has the capacity for repose which is to be seen in the most truly masculine natures. He has what Lamb called a " manly relish for life," joy in its every capacity, and an eager purpose to read its secrets out to the end. His personality is distinct in its kind, individual and not typical; and yet it is endowed with an electric impressiveness, and with a vast power

for stamping itself on other minds. Whoever once knows him, as a man or in his books, will henceforth carry the birthmark of his regenerating influence. He is not dainty or sentimental, but full of noble impulses, overflowing with sympathy, and gifted with geniality, robustness, and vitality. He has lived in the whole of his being, and he has poured out the manifold riches of his nature without measure. There is a completeness in his work, as of one who had left no corner of his being unoccupied. The mansion of his mind has all the rooms in use, while sun and air come into them in unstinted circulation. Work and play and joy are going forward in every one.

II.

In writing of Shelley, Browning says that to know truly the work of a subjective poet we must know his biography. "In our approach to the poetry we necessarily approach the personality of the poet," he says of those who find their inspiration in their own ideals; "in apprehending it we apprehend him, and certainly we cannot love it without loving him. Both for love's and for understanding's sake we desire to know him, and as readers of his poetry we must be readers of his biography also." Whether we regard Browning as a subjective poet or no, it is largely true of him also, though not in so large a measure as of Shelley, that it is his life which affords the right interpretation of his poetry. With such force of life, and with such a dominating personality, is Browning present in his works, that we can only understand what is in his poetry by understanding

how he accepts life and its greatest experiences. As a single instance, his married life illustrates his love poems in a way which flashes new meaning and beauty into them for all his readers.

To those capable of appreciating them, nothing can give an ampler insight into Browning's character than his relations to his wife. The history of their affection has in it something of romance, but more of tenderness, repose, and common development. Literature presents no love scene, no romance of the affections, more noble and lofty than the married life of Robert Browning and Elizabeth Barrett. Theirs was a genuine human love; not an allegory, as was that of Dante for Beatrice. Nor did their love gain its glory because Browning, in the manner of other poets, chose to idealize the object of his affections. It was the love of a great poet for a great poet, founded on a mutual faith and admiration, communion of sentiment, and the closest kinship in thought, feeling, and aspiration. Their affection was a great uplifting influence, in its awakening and sustaining power, to the genius of both these noble singers. Literature nowhere presents a purer or a higher conception of love than that to be found in the poetry of this wed-

ded pair. Clean as light and clear as crystal was their affection, and such is love in all which they have written. No words are too high, no ideal too lofty, no music too purely passionate, for their expression of faith in love, and the life and vision it gives to those who are worthy. Remembering the history of their affection as it appears in such hints as we have of it in the letters of Mrs. Browning's friends, and in a few of her own, many of Browning's poems gain new charm for the reader. In the light of this knowledge it is not surprising that he makes love the agent of man's redemption and growth while on earth. No poems having love for their subject and motive are more suggestive or more inspiring in a real and helpful sense, and at the same time so infused with the power of transforming life into spiritual attainment.

Elizabeth Barrett began to write poetry at an early age, and she published her first volume when seventeen. Imagination, aspiration, and sensibility marked her poetry, and a purpose to see and sing whatever life can give that is pure, good, and beautiful. At the age of twenty-seven, when just entering on her true career as a poet, she broke a blood-vessel on the lungs, and was

brought close to death's door. For many years she was a confirmed invalid, seldom leaving her room. Confined to her books and to her pen she gave her life to them with enthusiasm and high resolve, turned them into ministers of joy and growth, and made her sick-bed the poet's throne of song. There were in her poetry a sympathy, a tenderness, and a depth of feeling, so true and genuine, and so free and fresh an outpouring of a woman's heart in wealth of high thought and sentiment, that she soon made for herself a place in the affections of many.

When Browning first came to know Elizabeth Barrett does not appear; but while she was an invalid they met, and their acquaintance ripened into affection. She makes the poet in "Lady Geraldine's Courtship" read to the lady of his heart from the poetry of Wordsworth, Howitt, and Tennyson, —

> Or from Browning some Pomegranate, which, if cut deep down the middle,
> Shows a heart within blood-tinctured, of a veined humanity.

These lines were written two years before their marriage. At about the same time she wrote of him to an American correspondent as one she knew merely as a poet, but as a poet in whom she

had great faith. "Mr. Browning, with whom I have had some correspondence lately, is full of great intentions, the light of the future is in his forehead — also he will turn clear, I think, as he turns on; he is a poet of posterity. I have full faith in him as a poet and prophet."

Very slowly Elizabeth Barrett recovered, but when she was married she was still an invalid, seldom able to leave her father's house, and with little promise of being restored to health. Under these circumstances, it is not strange that her family objected to her marriage or that her father thought it a foolish adventure. If Miss Mitford is to be believed, the marriage was clandestine, and the consequences feared by all her friends. "I at Miss Barrett's wedding! It was a runaway match. Never was I so much astonished. He prevailed on her to meet him at church, with only the two necessary witnesses. They went by rail to Southampton, crossed to Havre, up the Seine to Rouen, to Paris by railway. There they stayed a week. Happening to meet with Mrs. Jameson, she joined them in their journey to Pisa; and accordingly they travelled by diligence, by railway, by Rhone boat — anyhow — to Marseilles, thence took shipping to Leghorn,

and then settled themselves at Pisa for six months. She says that she is very happy. God grant that it continue. I felt just exactly as if I had heard that Dr. Chambers had given her over, when I got the letter announcing the marriage, and found that she was about to cross to France. I never had an idea of her reaching Pisa alive." This account, exaggerated as it may probably be, seems to be in some degree confirmed by her words to an English poet friend: "Our plans were made up at the last in the utmost haste and agitation — precipitated beyond all intention."

Whatever the facts about the marriage, love worked a surprising cure for the bodily ills, and it was not many months before Mrs. Browning was writing to America of the great change it had been to her "from the seclusion in one room, to liberty and Italy's sunshine in these two kinds — when for a resigned life I take up a happy one and reel under it with my head and my heart." At the same time she wrote: "I begin, some four months after the greatest event of my life, by telling you that I am well and happy, and meaning to get as strong in the body by the help of this divine climate as I am in the

spirit, so much has God granted me compensation. . . . My husband's name will prove to you that I have not left my vocation to the rhyming art in order to marry; on the contrary we mean both of us to do a great deal of work, besides surprising the world by the spectacle of two poets coming together without quarrelling, wrangling, and calling names in lyrical measure. . . . We live here in the most secluded manner, eschewing English visitors, and reading 'Vasari' and dreaming dreams of Venice in the summer. . . . If I get quite strong, I may cross the desert on a camel yet, and see Jerusalem. There's a dream for you; nothing is too high or too low for my dreams now."

The new life of love and Italy seems almost to have intoxicated Mrs. Browning, giving her that new interest in life and that new courage which led almost to health. Always frail and fragile, however, she was watched and cared for by her poet husband with tenderest sympathy during the fifteen years remaining to her life. Four years after her marriage, as the first fruits of the new life she had gained, she published, in a new edition of her poems, the "Sonnets from the Portuguese." Under this disguise of pretended

translation, as if her sonnets were too personal and too directly out of her own heart-experiences to appear as her own work, she told the history of her affection. The love of a true woman's heart, in all its slow questioning growth to assurance, and in its fulness of devotion, has never been so truly sung as here in this one great woman poet's sonnets. Their delicate thought and their pure sentiment give them a beauty of the truest kind, which pervades them like a delicate aroma. A woman's heart informs every word, and gives it whatever meaning and purpose it has to impart. If the incidents in the history of their love-making are not all recorded in the poem, the inner meaning of it is here for him to read who can. There can be no doubt that she expected soon to die, that love came to her as a surprise, and that she found the peace and the rapture of it after much fear and hesitation.

Their marriage had a profound influence on the poetry of both. It made that of Browning clearer for the time being, richer in its human sympathies, and more lyrical in its character. It gave to hers a stronger intellectual purpose, energy to grasp greater poetic problems, and a less delicate and dainty touch. There can be no doubt that she

was confirmed in some of the worst of her poetic faults by his influence; but, at the same time, her mind broadened, and her life became richer and healthier in its spiritual aims. The poetry of the one illustrates that of the other, as well before as after their marriage. Their theories of life, and their religious beliefs, were singularly in harmony. Both were idealists after the manner of Plato and Hegel, she receiving the direction of her thought from Greece, and he getting his from Germany. Both believed in Christianity as a revelation to the individual soul, and as the true guide to the highest spiritual development. If they had grown up in the same home, under the same influences and the same teachings, they could not have been more in harmony in their poetic and religious beliefs. The same faults and the same excellences appear in their poetry. Both could be musical and harmonious in verse, when they chose; both despised technical forms and rules. In the poetry of each the leading element was one of philosophic thought, tempered by feeling, sentiment, and imagination. A high spiritual aim runs through all their work, and one that is of the same pattern and purpose in the poetry of each.

The "Sonnets from the Portuguese," "Aurora Leigh," and "Casa Guidi Windows" testify on almost every page to the emotional and spiritual influence of Robert Browning. They have a more sustained power and healthiness of thought than are to be found in the poetry of Elizabeth Barrett; and they show a heart at peace with the world and itself. Not less apparent is the influence on Robert Browning of his married life. In the same year with the publication of the "Portuguese Sonnets" appeared his "Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day," and five years later his "Men and Women." These are among the most readable of his poems, the most religious and personal in their purpose and method, and the most fully surcharged with the sentiment and the passion of love. At the end of "Men and Women," in the "One Word More" which closes the volume, he addresses his wife in words of the noblest sentiment and affection: —

> There they are, my fifty men and women,
> Naming me the fifty poems finished.
> Take them, Love, the book and me together.
> Where the heart lies, let the brain lie also.

Then he sings of Rafaël and the lady of his sonnets, this wedded pair preferring the sonnets to

all the treasures of his wondrous art. Now he sings of Dante and his portrait of Beatrice, which is prized by these two more than his "Inferno." Rafaël's sonnets and Dante's picture suggest what?

> This : no artist lives and loves that longs not
> Once, and only once, and for One only,
> (Ah, the prize!) to find his love a language
> Fit and fair and simple and sufficient —
> Using nature that's an art to others,
> Not, this one time, art that's turned his nature.
> Ay, of all the artists living, loving,
> None but would forego his proper dowry,—
> Does he paint? he fain would write a poem, —
> Does he write? he fain would paint a picture,
> Put to proof art alien to the artist's,
> Once, and only once, and for One only,
> So to be the man and leave the artist,
> Save the man's joy, miss the artist's sorrow.

Yet he cannot make statues or pictures, only sing his poems; but in the making of poems he paints or carves other men and women, who will tell her of himself, and become his tribute of affection. She has become to him his moon of poets, who shows one side of her nature to the world, but keeps the other for the poet of her heart: —

> God be thanked, the meanest of his creatures
> Boasts two soul-sides, one to face the world with,
> One to show a woman when he loves her.

This, rather, is that of which he thinks: —

> This I say of me, but think of you, Love.
> This to you — yourself my moon of poets.
> Ah, but that's the world's side — there's the wonder —
> Thus they see you, praise you, think they know you.
> There, in turn I stand with them and praise you,
> Out of my own self, I dare to phrase it.
> But the best is when I glide from out them,
> Cross a step or two of dubious twilight,
> Come out on the other side, the novel
> Silent silver lights and darks undreamed of
> Where I hush and bless myself with silence.

As Rafaël painted his Madonnas he sang a song to his love; and as Dante sang of the Inferno he drew an angel in the form of his Beatrice; but Browning cannot do either; he can only clasp his wife to his bosom: —

> Oh, their Rafaël of the dear Madonnas,
> Oh, their Dante of the dread Infernos,
> Wrote one song — and in my brain I sing it,
> Drew one angel — borne, see, on my bosom.

This noble tribute to his wife is surpassed in sweetness and pathos by those grand lines in which he invokes her presence as the inspiration of his muse, at the end of the first canto of the "Ring and the Book." Her memory was to him a benediction, as her presence had once been to him a joy; and it was still to him an inspiration, as when she sat by his side writing poems: —

O lyric Love, half-angel and half-bird
And all a wonder and a wild desire, —
Boldest of hearts that ever braved the sun,
Took sanctuary within the holier blue,
And sang a kindred soul out to his face, —
Yet human at the red-ripe of the heart —
When the first summons from the darkling earth
Reached thee amid thy chambers, blanched their blue,
And bared them of their glory — to drop down,
To toil for man, to suffer or to die, —
This is the same voice ; can thy soul know change ?
Hail, then, and hearken from the realms of help.
Never may I commence my song, my due
To God who best taught song by gift of thee,
Except with bent head and beseeching hand —
That still, despite the distance and the dark,
What was, again may be ; some interchange
Of grace, some splendor once thy very thought,
Some benediction anciently thy smile :
— Never conclude, but raising hand and head
Thither where eyes, that cannot reach, yet yearn
For all hope, all sustainment, all reward,
Their utmost up and on, — so blessing back
In those thy realms of help, that heaven thy home,
Some whiteness which, I judge, thy face makes proud,
Some wanness where, I think, thy foot may fall.

Once more he sings of his wife, this time in "Pacchiarotto and Other Poems." Now he calls her

The dearest poet I ever knew,
Dearest and greatest and best to me.

These poems separate themselves from love poetry in general by their sincerity and their

manly tone of truth. Browning does not sing of love for effect, but because of the deep and tender experiences of his heart. He sings of his wife in strains as high in imagination, and as knightly with true devotion, as those in which other poets have paid tribute to the ideal creations of their muse. His faith in this true woman's heart, which he knew so well, has made him believe that there can be but one love of man and woman, and that such true love lasts on through eternity.

III.

Browning is so far a thinker that he has developed a theory of art and of its relations to the life of man. The object of art, as Browning has defined it, and as he has reduced it to practice, is to give man a fit outlet for his nature in the direction of the Infinite. Art shows man his dependence on God, that communion with God is an absolute necessity of his nature; and it also teaches him that the perfection of earth is in its imperfection or in its capacity to direct the eyes of man from itself to the Absolute, in which man and nature alike have their source. "The whole poet's function," he says, is that "of beholding with an understanding keenness the universe, nature, and man, in their actual state of perfection in imperfection," or, in other words, "the whole poet's virtue" is that "of looking higher than any manifestation yet made of both beauty and good, in order to suggest from the utmost actual realiza-

tion of the one a corresponding capability in the other, and out of the calm, purity, and energy of nature to reconstitute and store up for the forthcoming stage of man's being a gift in repayment of that former gift, in which man's own thought and passion had been lavished by the poet on the else-incompleted magnificence of the sunrise, the else-uninterpreted mystery of the lake — so drawing out, lifting up, and assimilating this ideal of a future man, thus descried as possible, to the present reality of the poet's soul already arrived at the higher state of development, and still aspirant to elevate and extend itself in conformity with its still improving perceptions of, no longer the eventual Human, but the actual Divine."

The development of a theory of art does not seem to be the true mission of the poet. He is to create artistic forms and influences, leaving it to the critic to draw from his work a theory of art. Yet how can the artist work if he does not understand the laws of his art, if he has no clear conception of its purpose, and how that purpose is to work its effect on the mass of mankind? The artist must be accepted, therefore, as a true interpreter of art; and he it is who is its lawgiver and prophet; but he is such because he alone can

produce the beautiful examples which make art a motive and an inspiration.

The true critic goes to the works of the masters, and from them draws forth the laws and the canons of art. He does this, except in matters wherein reason and nature must be the lawgivers; and even then the soul with a seeing eye is the best interpreter of what nature and reason demand. That was the method of Lessing; that has been the method of Ruskin. The artist creates; the critic judges. The very fact that the artist is not also a critic, that he is absorbed in and overpowered by his creative intuition, if an artist of an advancing and original genius, makes it impossible for him to judge of his own work as related to the whole body of art, and to the universal laws on which art-creation rests. The man who is at once a critic and an artist gains in comprehensiveness, but he loses in creative and artistic power. Using his poetry for the interpretation of art and life, Browning has lost in poetic beauty and facility. He has not been in the highest sense an artist. Those who most read and admire him do so not because of his poetic merit, but because of his criticisms of life. They see in him a remarkable teacher and pro-

phet, and a profound interpreter of the great problems of human existence. He is, however, a striking example of a poet who has written much that has high merit on purely poetic grounds, and who also has the gift of critical interpretation. He knows the meaning of art, and possesses as well its creative genius.

The laws of art take new direction, and acquire a higher meaning, through the works of men of the highest genius, who determine for others the limits and the nature of their creations. Especially does the man of genius in whom philosophic insight is united to artistic power become the critic and interpreter in the realms of art. The mere critic of theories may determine whether the artist has been faithful to certain technical requirements which he regards as of supreme importance; but the spirit and the moral genius of art he cannot measure by any canons he employs. It is true that Browning is not so great a poet as he would have been had he been less philosophic; but his poetic genius is of so high an order, that, combining with his other gifts, it makes him a true interpreter of the meaning and purpose of art. Just as Lessing is a truer guide than any professional critic, so Brown-

ing is a worthier master in all which concerns art than those who give it interpretation from a purely speculative point of view. It is this fact which gives so much interest, freshness, and weight to his artistic theories.

Among the poets Browning has shown a remarkable insight into the nature of art; and he has been a true interpreter of the artistic faculty in man. A careful study of his poems on the several arts will show that this judgment is not too high. In "Pauline," "Sordello," "Popularity," "How it Strikes a Contemporary," "Two Poets of Croisic," and the epilogue to "Pacchiarotto" his subject is the poet. "Abt Vogler" and other poems give to music a grand interpretation. Painting is the subject in "Andrea del Sarto," "Fra Lippo Lippi," "The Guardian Angel," "Old Pictures in Florence," and many other poems of an originality and suggestiveness not to be found in any contemporary poetry.

Nature has the function, according to Browning, of causing man to realize that earth does not in itself contain any sure satisfaction for his higher nature. Art especially, in all its forms, awakes in man desires and hopes which the spiritual life alone can satisfy. The true artist is

ever learning that he cannot make his art express all there is in his soul to which he would give utterance. No form, however plastic; no material, however transformable, can fully embody man's aspiration. Beyond whatever work we accomplish is the unsatisfied ideal, calling us away from what has been done to what may yet be attained. Never on earth can desire find perfect fulfilment, or the ideal become complete reality.

Goethe and Carlyle have taught us that we are to find in the work we accomplish the highest satisfaction and attainment life can afford. They say to us that the ultimate truth cannot be known to reason, conscience, or art; but by work for and with one's fellow-men aid will come to us as a practical realization. Not what one believes is holy and sublime and true, or what one aspires to make the divine law of his life, is to be taken as the test of life; but what one accomplishes of actual work for humanity. It is the work we actually perform that is to show us worthy or debased. Browning goes to the secret treasure-house of each man's nature, reveals what is contained therein, and says: Not so; it is what one aspires to, the inmost hope and impulse of the soul, that is the test of life and its worth.

'Tis not what man does that exalts him, but what man would do.

The object of life, in all its manifestations, is to show man that the true home of his soul is in the realms of the spirit, and that he is to use earth as a gymnasium or training-school in preparation for it. In so far as a man or a poet has seen this he is wise and a true artist. In life all else is insignificant in comparison with this one truth which the time-experience gives.

Browning believes the artist may fall into two great errors, that of being contented with the earth as it is, and that of despising it as a means of growth. The artistic motive of many of his poems is one or the other of these errors. Paracelsus aimed at absolute knowledge and Aprile at infinite love, seeking to reach beyond what earth can do for us, and thus failing. Cleon describes Lazarus as a man who has seen the spiritual reality, and therefore finds all earthly motives unavailing to satisfy his nature. On the other hand, "Easter-Day" presents the picture of a man who loved only earth, and who was therefore shut out from heaven and made to glut his soul on the sensual things he had loved.

It is to art, more than to anything else, we are to look for the inculcation of this highest truth. Art turns the eyes of men away from the sensual, when it is true to its best self; and it creates aspirations which it is constantly seeking to gratify with the purest ideals. That much of the art of the world has been sensual in its origin and in its tendencies, Browning would admit; but this fact does not at all invalidate his theory. The art which is satisfied with the present, and with a sensual interpretation of life, inevitably leads to a debasement of character, in the artist and in the public.

Browning has described "the faultless painter," who did all his work according to the rules of art, whose lines were perfect and whose touch was sure; and yet, whose work had not in it the living power of divinest truth. This painter compares his own work with that of Raphael, whose artistic errors were many, but who had "reached above and through his art" to that which is higher than any perfection of line and form. The faultless painter had worked for pay and place and praise, for the things of sense and of time; and not that he might give to others the

visions of his own soul, as warnings and lessons in the deepest things of eternity. The perfect art of Greece, Browning suggests in "Old Pictures in Florence," was perfect only because it set to itself a limit in physical beauty. The later artists are faultier because they strive with a higher ideal, aiming through their ruder work to embody a higher and a grander thought. Greek art sought the grace and the completeness of the present; Christian art has aimed at the spiritual development of the future.

> Are they perfect of lineament, perfect of stature?
> In both of such lower types are we
> Precisely because of our wider nature!
> For time, theirs — ours, for eternity.

The highest art is not that which reaches perfection in any one direction, but that which turns our eyes above and beyond for something more than can be here attained.

> To-day's brief passion limits their range,
> It seethes with the morrow for us and more.
> They are perfect — how else? they shall never change:
> We are faulty — why not? we have time in store.
> The Artificer's hand is not arrested
> With us — we are rough-hewn, nowise polished:
> They stand for our copy, and once invested
> With all they can teach, we shall see them abolished.

'Tis a life-long toil till our lump be leaven —
The better! what's come to perfection perishes.
Things learned on earth, we shall practise in heaven.
Works done least rapidly, Art most cherishes.
Thyself shall afford the example, Giotto!
Thy one work, not to decrease or diminish,
Done at a stroke, was just (was it not?) "O!"
The great Campanile is still to finish.

In his "Abt Vogler," Browning has sung the same high thought in even finer measure and with nobler expression. The musician pours forth his feelings and his aspirations on the keys, but wishing the while that his music could take some visible form, could grow into a palace, or be put with glowing colors on canvas. Ravishing as the music was, it passes at once away, and it ceases to be more than a memory. In that very fact of its transitoriness is the superiority of music as an art; for the more intangible art is, the more fully does it accomplish its high purpose. The true mission of art is that it gives life to us, opens to us the door of higher spiritual attainment, and not that it produces some outward thing of beauty. The musician's palace of art endures in himself, because it has brought him closer to God, and to that true attainment wherein at last the soul realizes itself in the Infinitely Perfect. All true art teaches us that we shall

in the future attain to what we desire, because we now see in vision, and long for, what cannot be here wrought into fulfilment: —

> And what is our failure here but a triumph's evidence
> For the fulness of the days? Have we withered or agonized?
> Why else was the pause prolonged but that singing might issue thence?
> Why rushed the discords in, but that harmony should be prized?

Browning looks upon art as the agent of personality in man, as the means by which man works out his true destiny as an individual being. Its chief purpose should be moral and spiritual; in other words, the development of the soul into harmony with the Infinite. It helps man to express himself to his fellows, and it helps him to realize that which he himself is. If the art itself satisfies the desire of man's heart, then it turns into a curse. When it sends man to the Supreme Artist, it fulfils its mission.

So often has Browning given expression to this theory of art in his poetry, there can be no doubt he entertains it with genuine conviction. When reduced to a prose statement, it is always possible that it will lose something of his own poetic charm and largeness of conception. He cannot have been disturbed because his theory of art was

not in harmony with the prevailing one, however much it may have caused others to distrust his teaching. He is more in sympathy with the distinctly Christian conception of art, of the great Italian masters, than with the realistic theories of the present time. He does not find the motive of art, with Ruskin, in the interpretation of nature or in the inculcation of morality, but in the soul's contact with the Infinite Beauty, which is the source and sustainment of all the beauty we can know. To Browning beauty is subjective, given in the soul by man's contact with God; to Ruskin it is objective, and awakened by man's contact with outward beauty.

It is man as a spiritual being who is always the motive and the inspiration of Browning's art; and this fact is to be kept constantly in mind in any attempt to understand his poetry. Ruskin sees in nature what is perfect in its kind, what is satisfying to the present æsthetic and moral needs of man, what gives health and truth as we come rightly into sympathy with it. Browning believes that nature is imperfect; that if we stop with it, and are content with what it gives us, we are lost to all further development; and that it

has no true purpose beyond that of awakening in us a desire for what is higher.

There is a wholeness, as of the entire man speaking, in Browning's poetry, not to be found in that of any of his contemporaries. He does not live to be an artist, concentrating all his power on that one purpose and passion. Trying to live out the life God has given him to live, he finds it best to use that life as a poet, and in that way to reach and express himself to his fellow-men. He lives not for beauty alone; for beauty is only one phase of life and the world. With that are joined love, truth, right, and nature. In man is the measure of all things to be found, for he takes all other things and experiences up into himself and makes them his own; and Browning has had no other object as a poet than the interpretation of man. Of all poetic motives and sources of the beautiful, man is the highest, and he is the most worthy of the poet's aim and endeavor.

IV.

Browning is a poet who seems to defy classification, so much does he differ from all his contemporaries. In his employment of the dramatic method, and in his love for psychologic analysis, he is able to touch hands with some of the poets working about him; but, on the whole, he presents a unique figure in the literature of the present time. He has no sympathy with the love of melody which has been so prominent in English poetry during the last half-century.

He knows and appreciates the value of the poetic art, and he knows how to bring out its finest effects; but he has a feeling of disdain for it, after all. At least, he will not be cramped by it, or hold fast by its laws. He breaks over all bonds and makes his own methods. He depends on thought and sentiment for his poetic effects, and on the inner and more subtle qualities which

he forces into his work. He seems not to believe that poetry consists in any special form given to language or in compliance with any technical requirements which must be absolutely obeyed.

Browning has a perfect command over versification, when he chooses to employ it, and great richness of melody. He has a remarkable versatility in metre and rhythm, though he is reckless of rules and defiant of precedents in his artistic elaboration. Many of his shorter poems show that he has the gift of music when he chooses to use it; but he prefers to give heed mainly to the content rather than to the form of his verse. Drawn to the rich harmonies of Keats and Shelley in early life, he seems to have been driven into revolt against what in time became the chief characteristic of every petty versifier. Deliberately he refused to go with the multitude in their efforts to turn poetry into a matter of rhythm and fine-sounding words. As he suggests in "At the Mermaid," he made it his purpose to "sow song-sedition," and "a schism in verse provoke." At the same time it is to be noted, in his justification, that his subjects are not usually adapted in any large degree to musical treatment. In "Pauline" are two lines which will apply to

his own work, and they explain his method of writing: —

> So I will sing on fast as fancies come;
> Rudely, the verse being as the mood it paints.

His thoughtful and deep-searching way of looking at life does not adapt itself to smooth-flowing verse; but the stormy and passionate life he studies most of all needs a method of interpretation suited to its own characteristics. As he does not sing of balmy, sunny, and happy days in June, no jingling and joy-conveying verse will answer to his needs.

His style is his own, the natural way of expression with him. He says straight-out the thought which is in his mind, in the manner in which it first presents itself to him. He is full, however, of recondite and subtle allusions, a mere glance and then on, that require the fullest knowledge to follow, and the quickest apprehension to get the full bearing and meaning thereof. His keen, swift mind eludes us without the closest attention. There are vigor, robustness, and a manhood of the most strenuous kind in his verse. He does not resort to dainty devices, after the manner of Tennyson; he indulges in no idle conceits: but he has a strong man's insistence on strong things.

He is in every fibre of his nature moral, clean, and pure; and such he ever is in his verse. In being a strong man he does not find it necessary to be coarse, brutal, or sensual. He is rugged; but because he speaks plainly and clearly, and with purpose to say precisely what he means. Nothing appears in his verse merely for effect and ornament; but whatever is there has a purpose and a fresh thought underlying. He hates all pretentious and showy work, and loves all that is honest and sincere.

Browning has much to say; but his manner of saying it is often wanting in artistic beauty and finish. "I only wish he would atticise a little," was the discerning expression of Landor. "Few of the Athenians had such a quarry on their property, but they constructed better roads for the conveyance of the material." He lacks in artistic power, and in the capacity to give a completed form to his poetry. He is obscure, and hard to understand, demanding the closest attention of his reader, and often requiring long study in order to reach his meaning. He delights in parentheses, always and everywhere an abomination; he indulges in frequent excursions into other subjects than that which he has under

consideration, much to the perplexity of his readers, and he makes abrupt transitions, frequent and almost impossible to bridge over. Then, in his monodramatic poems, he gives no outside clew to the speaker, his circumstances, and his attitude of mind. In his simple tales from Greek and Scandinavian mythology, William Morris presents an argument in prose, and thus gives the reader a full understanding of the situation at the beginning. Browning leaves his readers to find their own bearings under circumstances which make it doubtful if the journey will repay the trouble it will cost. His situations are so obscure, so subtly psychological in their implications, and so out of the reach of ordinary experiences, that it is difficult to find a starting-point for many of his poems. His literary, historical, and biographical allusions are frequently of the minutest kind, and such as can come within the reading and memory of but few persons. This adds to the difficulty of finding the place whence he departs; but even when the subject is one within the acquaintance of every person, the obscurity seems not much to be lessened. He deals with those experiences of men which lie within the inmost recesses of the soul. He loves

what is odd, grotesque, morbid, and quaint. His purpose seems to be to analyze the strange and peculiar types of life, which illustrate the more obscure and startling phases of man's nature. Corruption of heart, hypocrisy, fanaticism, and formality he portrays with singular fidelity; and with a remarkable faithfulness to the conditions, motives, and circumstances under which they appear.

Browning's poetry is often harsh in manner, wanting in melody, and rough in rhyme and metre. He introduces uncouth and distracting rhymes, and he violates the law of melody when it can only be to the serious hurt of his verse. Yet he says, in one of his prefaces: "I do not apprehend any more charges of being wilfully obscure, unconscientiously careless, or perversely harsh." What seems to be affectation is little more than loyalty to his own nature and an exaggerated insistence on thought as opposed to melody. He is sometimes smoother and sometimes rougher, but the same characteristics have been in his poetry from first to last. In the most harmonious of his verses he is an intellectual gymnast, leaping from thought to thought, and demanding the utmost agility in the reader to

follow his movements. In his most obscure and least musical poems there is yet great freshness and richness of thought, a swift movement and harmony of purpose, with a true outlining and development of character.

What the poet needs is life, a life ampler and nobler than is possessed by other men. In so far as he has made his own life poetic with heroism and nobility of sentiment has he the power to make other men realize the beauty of the world, and know that they walk through it day by day. Unless there is that in him which is greater than the sunset and its glory, he cannot make other men see its tinted beauty and its delight of coloring. This, at least, is the impulse and the thought which run through all Browning's poetry, giving purpose, color, and strength to it. He does not sing for the sake of the song, but that he may give life an impulse and a meaning impressive and inspiring.

Bidding defiance to the technical functions of poetry, Browning provides a remedy in the intrinsic richness of his themes or in the wealth of their spiritual suggestiveness. If not the babbling of brooks to rhythmic cadence, as they leap over stone after stone in harmonious flow of their

waters, his poetry shows the tidal movement of the ocean in obedience to higher attractions. His poetry is like the strong and resistless force of a great river, carrying on its bosom mighty ships and many a smaller craft. There is a trend and power to it as of a planet wheeling on its way through mid regions of space, not fuming and fretful, but commanding and triumphant. It has volume and mass, and the might of unconquerable certainties.

As a poet, Browning has reserve and reticence, willingness to bide his time, and the confidence of a perfectly balanced and natural activity of his whole mind; but, when he moves forward to what he believes in, there is a winged sweep of thought which exhausts every power of the reader to follow.

The art of Browning is Gothic in spirit, full of soaring aspiration, wide-varied in its directions of impulse, and yet holding grandly and sublimely to one main purpose. The outreaching of life towards the Infinite, taking many directions, and leading to endless forms of tragedy and comedy, is the burden of his poetry. There is symmetry in it, and yet there is endless variety. Multiplied differences abound, and yet the whole consents in a beautiful and majestic harmony of structure.

Its whole expression is that of life and aspiration, bidding defiance to change and decay, passionate in endeavor, irrepressible in search and longing, and smitten with a yearning to see every beauty and to taste every joy life affords.

Like Dante, Browning's greatness as an artist lies in his majestic and compassionate interpretation of the joy and the suffering, the comedy and the tragedy of life, and on a grand scale. He lays hold of life in the same serious manner as that which we see in Dante, though he is not so sad of countenance or renunciant of heart; and he looks at life with the same piercing intellectual vision, with the same awe, and with a like depth of heart-experience.

Five added centuries of time make it impossible for Browning to present the Gothic spirit with the same limits it had in Dante's genius. The later poet has transferred the stage of the Divine Comedy from the other world to this, and its actors are now living men and women, not the shades who walk the infernal or the celestial shores. He rejects all mythic appurtenances, sweeps out of sight every artificial contrivance of his predecessor, and takes life as it is into his poetry.

It is man of whom Browning sings, as Wordsworth sang of nature; man as a soul seeking unity with God, but in the process of creation. He gives clear-cut and charming descriptions of what he has seen in nature, brief, incisive, magical with flashing penetration of thought; but man he ever delights in. Nature is to him only the environment of the living and struggling human being. Man under all circumstances and conditions interests him, low as well as high, noble and vile alike. It is the soul in its struggles, toils, sins, achievements, defilements, hopes, and loves, that attracts his eye, that commands his sympathy. He loves the pure, hates the vile; but all fascinate him, and all are to be faithfully interpreted.

His theory of art would seem likely to make him a romanticist, leading to subjective visions and wild excesses of spiritual aspiration. This tendency is balanced by his profound interest in man, and by the sound sense and stability of his thought. His is a Gothic mind developed in an age of science. He is a romanticist working in contact with a generation given to machinery and industrial invention. Instead, therefore, of following Richter and Novalis in the creation of

characters that are more spiritual than manly, his Gothic temper works itself out in the sympathetic appreciation of humanity in all its many types and personalities. Man seeking his destiny through countless conditions of growth presents himself to the poet as an object of the highest imaginative stimulus, arousing in him a poetic fervor akin to that created in other poets by a direct contact with beauty. It is not grand personalities or noble actions alone which appeal to him as a poet, but the whole process through which man works out his destiny as a spiritual being. It is this process of development, as it affects individuals, which arouses his imagination and his reason to their highest activity; for, even with the most ordinary men, the inner experience of life is one of struggle and loss or struggle and attainment, and under conditions of higher moment than the siege of Troy or the taking of Jerusalem.

Browning is an artist whose materials are individual men in all the complex relations of life, rather than a civilization or a mighty formative idea. Dante took up the whole problem of man's spiritual destiny as it belongs to the race, but Browning deals with it as it belongs to the indi-

vidual soul; and yet Browning is like Dante in his portrayal of struggle and tragedy on a grand scale. He lays hold of the problem of human destiny in the same serious and anxious manner, as the one thought large enough to arouse all his powers.

Browning has a wonderful gift of soul-penetration, of looking into and through other persons. He divines what they are, how they think, and what they are worth, with the swift, sure eye of keenest inspiration. He thus reads the open secret of all kinds of characters, with the same inmost sympathy and loyalty. His imagination takes this direction, when most active, of seeing into other natures and realizing them as if they were his own.

He has an extensive and varied learning, which he employs with great skill, as it is always suffused and glowing with imagination and feeling. His vivid imagination, quick and penetrative in power, discerns beauty with keenest eye; and truth opens to his magic touch. He brings to the treatment of his wide-ranging subjects a knowledge minute and profound, in art and literature, history and science, romance and music. He has a remarkable acquaintance with and

insight into life and character in all countries and periods. In many directions he has an eager and never satisfied acquisitiveness; not for mere facts, but for knowledge that interprets the largest issues of life.

He does not care for science or philosophy in themselves, or for any other knowledge save in so far as it illustrates human nature, and gives him a clearer insight into its meaning and purpose. To know man is the one passion and the one delight of his life; and he thinks no search wasted which brings him closer comprehension of an individual soul, and of its own special experiences. His knowledge of man, and of what enters into his success and failure, is of the widest and truest kind.

V.

In one of his poems Browning has described himself as "a writer of plays"; and in one of his prefaces he says: "Such poems as the following come properly enough, I suppose, under the head of 'Dramatic Pieces'; being, though for the most part lyric in expression, always dramatic in principle, and so many utterances of so many imaginary persons, not mine." He may be rightly called a dramatic poet, though only a small proportion of his poems have taken the form of plays. In even his shorter poems it is some character with a distinct and unique personality who speaks, whose thoughts are uttered, and whose situation and circumstances must be understood in order to reach its meaning. His poetry is dramatic in principle, because it presents the living person speaking his own thoughts, sentiments, and feelings, and in a manner the most real and natural. His characters are thoroughly individ-

ual; and they impress themselves on the reader with the force of the keenest and most vital personality.

His seven plays are poems written in dramatic form; but they are better adapted to the closet than the stage. They are too thoughtful, and too much given to the subtle analysis of character, to succeed with the great majority of play-goers. In the preface to "Paracelsus," Browning forewarned his readers against regarding it as a dramatic work; and yet it is nearly as dramatic in method as any of his other poems. His account of the purpose had in view in its writing would apply as well to his dramas. "It is an attempt," was his characteristic account of it, "probably more novel than happy, to reverse the method usually adopted by writers whose aim it is to set forth any phenomenon of the mind or the passions by the operation of persons and events; and that, instead of having recourse to an external machinery of incidents to create and evolve the crisis I desire to produce, I have ventured to display somewhat minutely the mood itself in its rise and progress, and have suffered the agency by which it is influenced and determined to be generally discernible in its effects alone, and subordinate

throughout, if not altogether excluded: and this for a reason. I have endeavored to write a poem, not a drama; the canons of the drama are well known, and I cannot think but that, inasmuch as they have immediate regard to stage representation, the peculiar advantages they hold out are really such only so long as the purpose for which they are at first instituted is kept in view. I do not very well understand what is called a dramatic poem, wherein all those restrictions only submitted to on account of compensating good in the original scheme are scrupulously retained, as though for some special fitness in themselves, — and all new facilities placed at an author's disposal by the vehicle he selects, as pertinaciously rejected. It is certain, however, that a work like mine depends more immediately on the intelligence and sympathy of the reader for its success."

It is not stage effect which Browning has in view in his dramas, but the unfoldment of character. In the creation of such individualities as will best unfold and interpret character in all its manifold forms, he does not work by external machinery of incident, action, and conflict, but by causing a particular person to utter

aloud the thoughts which express a peculiar sentiment or mood of his mind. This he accomplishes not so much by the action displayed as by the sentiments uttered and the feelings expressed. The action of the play is inadequate to secure the desired effect on the stage; the motive is too subtle and the development too thoughtful. Only when carefully read do the real purpose and spirit of the play present themselves, and even then only to those who can appreciate the finest analysis of character and the subtlest shades of personal motive.

In much the larger number of Browning's poems there is but one speaker, so that his method may be properly called the monodramatic. The time, the country, the social and the moral environment, the situation and character of the speaker, are all developed through his words, no clew to them being given in any other manner, except in the title of the poem. His chief object is not to tell a story, even in those poems where there is most of movement and incident, but that of unfolding character and that of analyzing the hidden being of personality. He creates personalities of a unique character, not necessarily typical, but intensely and thoroughly original. Given

such a person, in some mood which betrays his whole nature in its every hidden crevice and lurking place of motive and feeling, and Browning makes him stand out before us revealed through and through by a blaze of light that leaves no place undiscovered. He minutely displays the mood in its rise and progress, and shows how it grows out of the personality of the character who is being analyzed. In pursuing this method Browning's object is the interpretation of a soul or a distinct personality; and he would prove that personality cannot be accounted for by its relations to humanity. In the dedication to the revised form of "Sordello" he clearly defined the purpose and method pursued in his monodramas. "The historical decoration," he wrote, "was purposely of no more importance than a background requires, and my stress lay on the incidents in the development of a soul; little else is worth study. I, at least, always thought so." His one sole aim in all his poetry is to show that the development of a soul is the object of life. Whatever there is in his poetry which is dramatic grows out of his attempt to show how individuals, placed under circumstances peculiar to themselves, are exalted or debased according to the

way in which they use the instruments given them for their development.

The dramatic motive of Shakspere grows out of the relations of men to each other as social beings or as units in the life of humanity. They help or hinder each other because mutually dependent; they are influenced by each other's thoughts and actions, and they are constantly affected through the solidarity of the race. The motives, the conflicts, and the tragic situations wrought out in his dramas are the results of these relations of men to each other. Browning does not think of man in this way, as a member of humanity, as dependent on it and the environment of feeling, tradition, and thought it provides for him. He thinks of man always as a distinct personality, whose nearest and most intimate relationship is with the Infinite Person; and as preparing himself for an eternal spiritual destiny. It is the individual man he interprets, whose sources of strength are not in humanity, but in his relations to God and a world of supernatural realities.

The tragedy in Shakspere's plays is the result of the loves, jealousies, and hates of men as social beings. The tragedy in Browning's poems is the result of an individual's acceptance or rejection of

the conditions which advance his spiritual destiny. Shakspere is interested in the individual only as related to humanity; Browning is interested in humanity only as composed of many distinct individuals, each pursuing his own personal career. The result of this difference in their conception of the individual is that Shakspere writes a true drama, in which a number of persons affect and change each other's present welfare, and that Browning writes a monodrama, in which an individual uses his environment, whether of nature or humanity, for his development as a soul working out a spiritual destiny, which can only be realized in the future. Browning's individual may accept the spiritual development as the true aim and motive of his life, or he may reject it. He may realize that earth is imperfect, and that he can gain the true end of his development only in the future world; or he may accept the present as enough in itself. If he accepts the true aim of life, it can be realized only by what is, in an earthly sense, defeat. If he rejects the true aim of life, and prefers earthly success, it is at the loss of what is most worthy of attainment. Almost without exception these two forms of conflict give to Browning's poems their dramatic

situations, such as they are. His conception of the individual man determines the whole attitude of his work and his method of interpreting life. It even determines the particular form in which he has expressed his poetical genius.

The incidents in the development of a soul assume an importance to Browning which they do not have in the work of any other dramatist or poet of the present time. His conception of their importance gives a didactic aim to his work, and makes him a teacher or a preacher as well as a poet. He is not, however, a didactic poet in the usual sense of that word; for his teaching is so inwoven with his artistic purpose, so subtly plays about it and guides it, that it is never intrusive or prominent. Indeed, it could be justly denied that Browning has a didactic aim, so intimately does he connect his teachings with the individuality and the activity of his characters. A comparison of a number of his poems with each other, as to their underlying purpose and motive, however, will reveal a distinct philosophic and moral aim in all his work. His purpose is not mainly artistic; for he recognizes the need of bringing all human aims into one harmonious expression and giving them a true proportion.

Browning has been called the poet of pyschology; and it is the tendency of his mind towards the analysis of character which gives to his poetry its peculiar dramatic form. With the growth of scientific studies the word psychology has come into great prominence; but it has obtained its recognition mainly in connection with positive and evolutionary theories. George Eliot and Henry James are described as psychologic novelists, because their main purpose is the analysis and portrayal of character, and not the telling of stories. Scott portrays his characters through his epic narrative, full of life and incident, making the reader know them through what they are and what they do. George Eliot makes the narrative subordinate, and she gives her whole strength, in description and conversation, to the development and interpretation of character. Scott puts his characters on the stage, and then permits them to act out the drama of life without interruption. George Eliot continually appears before the scenes to interpret her characters and their deeds, and their relations to each other. She regards man as the result of heredity, as guided by the past of the race, and as profoundly affected by his social surroundings.

Because Browning also devotes himself to the analysis of character, he belongs to the psychologic school with George Eliot; but in this one direction only does he touch a point of sympathy with her. He is an idealist; she was a positivist. He sees in man's spiritual origin that which makes each individual distinct from all others; she regarded man as the product of heredity and altruistic influences. He believes in God and a future world as the surest of realities; she believed in humanity and the survival of the individual in the race. This complete and profoundly important contrast in their conceptions of character has not been sufficiently taken into account in applying the word "psychologic" to them both. If it belongs to the one, it does not to the other, unless it is strictly limited, in its application, to the method and form of their work. They both follow a method strictly the opposite to that of Shakspere and Scott, but for reasons which have little in common.

Browning follows the psychologic method because, to him, each person is unique and individual, unlike every other, and to be classed only in an order by himself. George Eliot uses the psychologic method because the character of

each person is determined by hereditary and evolutionary forces which it is most interesting and profitable to trace out in the spirit of scientific research. The word "psychologic," when used in this latter sense, has a very indefinite meaning, and one that is as misleading as it is indefinite. Those authors who make it their chief purpose to portray character, in contrast with those who aim at the creation of an elaborate plot and a fascinating narrative, may be said to be psychologic in method. Rigidly confined to this meaning, and without reference to psychologic and scientific theories, the phrase "psychologic method" has a definite and desirable place as a descriptive term in literary criticism. If it is also made to mean, as it sometimes has been, a recognition of the positive and evolutionary theories of man's origin and destiny, then it does in no degree whatever apply to Browning, for he has no sympathy with those theories or any of the conclusions drawn from them.

Browning has little capacity for the development of dramatic action. His plays lag in movement, they have no proper development and culmination, and their interest is either in the novel characters they present or in the thoughtful

teaching they contain. What dramatic movement there is is in the changes of mood which come to the characters, and not in the advancement of the action itself. To investigate personalities, to discover what they are and how they act, forms the leading purpose in all his work. This purpose he has well defined in the person of one of his characters: —

> Take the least man of all mankind, as I;
> Look at his head and heart, find how and why
> He differs from his fellows utterly.

This is a purpose which profoundly and deeply interests Browning, for it is personality in man, whatever the form it takes, which most of all things attracts and fascinates him.

Personality of many kinds Browning has sketched in his poems and plays, with skill of the largest fashioning power and insight of the keenest. He identifies himself with his characters, takes their point of view, and yet gives them a personality of a unique kind. He loves most of all those characters who are peculiar, who have no imitators, who do not belong to a class, who represent themselves only. He has seen human nature through and through, in a wide variety of its manifestations; and he is ever alive

to what is rich, impressive, and significant in it. Not the heroic, the masterful, or the great impress him in the keenest manner; but those in whom the greatest amount of personality appears, and those who exhibit the strangest and most grotesque phases of human development. He knows how to appreciate the finest character, and he has a fellow-feeling for the meanest. That he loves what is good and true, and hates what is debased and wrong, is ever made evident. He never forgets the moral integrity of the universe, and he has no disposition to confound evil with good.

As Browning is both a subjective and an objective poet, he leaves none of his characters free from the bias of his own mind. Shakspere creates characters who stand out distinct from himself, with no mark of his mind on them. Browning is quite as original in his conceptions, and his characters are as unique as Shakspere's; but they always bear the stamp of his creating mind. His sign-mark is on them; and he appears behind them to direct their movements. They do not absolutely speak in the voice of nature and humanity; but they sooner or later betray a Browning-like tone and accent. He does not

create his characters for the sake of the characters alone; but that he may through them illustrate and define his theories of human nature. Scott creates characters for their own sake, for what they are in themselves, and for the sake of the part they play in his epic narratives; Browning never can put from his mind his theory of the relations of man to the spiritual world. His characters expound a philosophy, and illuminate an ideal conviction. Their point of view, however much their own it may be, serves to make Browning's more distinct and luminous. This is not done by putting Browning's opinions into the mouths of his characters, for they as often as otherwise say what to him is not acceptable. He enforces his thought upon the reader by the atmosphere he creates, by the conclusions he reaches for his characters, and by the attitude of mind which is exhibited in their creation. So thoroughly well defined is Browning's conception of the universe, and the spiritual laws which it manifests, that it presents itself in the same manner to all his characters. It enforces itself on them in accordance with the habit of their own natures; but in itself it never varies from poem to poem. Man's individuality, his super-

natural origin, his present condition of probation, his growth through the struggles and failures of earth, his immortal destiny, are the underlying themes, the controlling thoughts, in all his poems. Because his characters are all moulded in the light of these conceptions, they exhibit the mind of Browning as well as their own natures. Apart from the influence of this theory of life, they are unsurpassed in originality and in individuality of nature; but the presence of the theory betrays their creator, and shows him in that thoughtful attitude of mind he always occupies.

In only two of his longer poems has Browning spoken in his own person; and even in these the monodramatic form is retained. These are "Christmas-Eve and Easter-Day" and "La Saisiaz"; both of which are infused through and through with Browning's spirit and thought. Into them has he crowded so much of his philosophy and religion, we are entitled to read his other poems by the light they provide. With the help thus afforded we turn to his dramas and his monodramatic poems, and find they are but elaborations of the same theme. Had he followed the method of Shakspere he would have written better plays; but we prefer to take him

for what he is, and rejoice that he has followed a way of his own. His poetry never is dramatic in the absolute sense, of which that of Shakspere is the type; but it is always more or less completely subjective, and given the impression of his own mind. Whatever the voice which speaks, there is to be heard the deep tones of a higher word uttered behind it, and which makes us feel that this character is but the echo of some one greater than himself. After becoming familiar with his poetry, the reader finds that he is always face to face with Browning, and that he is being taught certain great truths through these artistic creations. In time, he may come to so love the teaching that he ceases to care for anything else in Browning's poetry. Whatever his artistic defects, the world is in his debt for some of the most fascinating and remarkable among literary creations, and for thoughts that have a living freshness and power in them.

VI.

THERE can be no doubt that Browning is a great poet, and one who will compel the future to give its admiration freely to his best work. He is not a mere writer of verses or even a great poet in the purely artistic sense; and he is not merely a thinker or an essayist who has adopted a poetical form of expression. He has all the qualities of a poet; imagination soaring and clear-visioned, a strong and rugged power of giving form to his feeling and thought, a subtle and penetrating insight into the meanings of life and nature, and a richly tempered and joyous sympathy with man and the world. He is led through his emotions and sympathies to appreciate all that is beautiful and good; and he is impressed through his feelings and aspirations with the grandeur and the marvel of what life reveals.

Not forgetting that Browning is a poet of lofty wing and far-sweeping sight, he may be more specially characterized as an intellectual poet, as a poet who thinks and philosophizes. He delights in taking up the great problems of life, in suffusing them with the light of his own thought and feeling, and then in giving them an interpretation clear, inspiring, and sublime. He has thought very deeply on all the great problems man has debated through the ages, and he has many fresh suggestions to make in regard to them. The conventional answers to the questions man is ever asking do not suffice with him; he wishes to consult the oracles for himself.

He loves the problems suggested by man and his life here, and he delights to cope with them. The enigma of man's nature and destiny attracts him; he seems to be drawn to it as the moth to the flame. It fascinates him, and yet he looks at it coolly, deals with it in a lofty spirit, probes into it as far as it can be done, and flashes out his wonderful interpretations with the instinctive sureness of genius. He comes to these problems seriously, as one who feels the weight and burden of them, who believes them the most worthy subjects with which a man or a poet can deal.

He looks at these problems with hope; and he is never cast down by them. He has a steady conviction that their meaning is open to man, and that it is worthy— and it alone — of his thought and search. If Carlyle, Heine, and Byron despaired of a solution, were overmastered by the problem of man's being, or gave way to despair and gloom, not so Browning. His hope burns calmly on, no despair touches his heart; his faith is ever flame-like and bright, as if it came out of unquenchable fires of knowledge.

No English poet, unless it is Shakspere, will yield so much of thought, for the attentive reader, as Browning. He is full of wisdom, rich with revelations to the moral nature, and a needed spiritual teacher for the latter half of the nineteenth century. Poetry has its word to speak as well as science; and Browning speaks the word of poetry for a scientific age. He has the analytic spirit, he can probe into the facts of life and nature as well as any other, and as deeply; but he reads life without destroying it, and his supreme purpose is constructive and synthetic. He sees through and through the world with the eyes of the poet, and he does not need to dissect it to know it. He is an absolutely independent

thinker, brave, clear-seeing, tolerant, and wide-souled. He unites in one nature some of the highest capacities of both the reasoner and the creator; with an eye keen for facts, like Darwin's, he unites a subtle instinct for truth, like Kant's, and Dante's high-soaring imagination. Browning sweeps the horizon with his vision, and he does not forget the sun which shines over his head. He is a daring thinker, robust in thought, and with an instinctive regard for what is real and fact-like. His is one of the most balanced and rounded minds to be found in the history of English literature. He views life on many sides, with faculties healthy and well proportioned one to another. He has a strong imagination, but it is not in excess of his other faculties, and it does not cause him to see the world in the form of any mirage which it creates. He has an analytic faculty, but it is balanced by vigorous spiritual perceptions and an active imagination. He is too speculative and too metaphysical for a poet, and yet how impassioned are his emotions, how radiant his sympathies!

Browning is both a subjective and an objective poet. His literary method is objective; but his philosophy of life, and his interpretation of the

individual man, are subjective. By able critics he has been called a realist; and by others, quite as able, a transcendentalist. His merit is that he rises to a point of view higher than that of either the purely subjective or the purely objective poet, and unites the two methods, with results in some respects higher than either has attained. He has not Shakspere's gift of objective creation, but he has a firmer grasp of the subjective forces of life. He has not Spenser's winged idealism, but he has a much truer appreciation of the objective realities of existence. He uses nature and intuition, objectivities and emotions, with an equal appreciation of their worth, joining them in a true synthesis.

Browning has been described as representing "militant transcendentalism, the transcendental movement at odds with the scientific"; but the description is not specially felicitous or accurate. He does not violently oppose himself to the scientific movement, though he is not in sympathy with its conclusions that are materialistic and agnostic. He is an idealist by conviction, with many affinities for the teachings of Hegel; but he has given idealism the shape of his own original and independent mind. He is not a disciple of

any of the great masters of idealistic philosophy, he has thought out the problems of the universe for himself, and he gives them a poetic rather than a philosophic interpretation. Those who are specially interested in philosophy will be likely to find in Browning conclusions similar to their own, and they will set forth the closeness of his relations to Hegel or some other; but such a label does not fit the man, and it seems quite out of place when fastened on Browning. He has been much influenced by the philosophy of Hegel, without doubt; but that philosophy has been to him simply a thing to wrestle with, in order to the trying of his own strength; and he has gained by the encounter. It is not Hegel who speaks in his poetry, though his interpretations of life have been informed and enlarged by some of the theories of the great idealist. He identifies love and knowledge in the same manner as Hegel identifies being and thought; but Browning gives to the individual a place in his way of thinking that is not at all in accordance with the theories of Hegel.

Browning is too triumphantly confident of the truth of idealism to become its militant defender. His profound interest in the individual and his

relations to the Infinite grows out of that philosophy. His whole aim has been to show that it is possible

> — to joint
> This flexile, finite life once tight
> Into the fixed and infinite,

and to make man's relations to God the one controlling thought and purpose of life. He does not believe that the truth which is of supreme worth comes to us from without, from the study of nature or the history of man: —

> Truth is within ourselves;
> There is an inmost centre in us all
> Where truth abides in fulness.

Each individual has access to God through his own nature, and Browning judges men by their faithfulness to this inner light of reason and intuition. He deals with the individual as related to God, not as related to nature. He does not start with the objective world or with a study of nature; but with the Transcendent God, from whom come all life and light. He assumes that God exists, and that he is a supremely transcendent Personality. From that centre he judges all things, and ranges them in order according to their relations to that fact: —

> He dwells in all,
> From life's minute beginnings, up at last
> To man — the consummation of this scheme
> Of being, the completion of this sphere
> Of life.

He does not identify God with law, but raises him infinitely above it, and makes him in the most actual sense a personal being. His faith in God is earnest, strong, and deep; and yet it is not formal and conventional. The ordinary thoughts about God do not in the least satisfy him, and no statement of creed or theology is enough to gain the assent of his mind. These words are spoken by one of his characters: —

> He glows above
> With scarce an intervention, presses close
> And palpitatingly, his soul o'er ours.

It is not to be supposed that these words are precisely those with which Browning would make statement of his own faith in God; but they indicate his attitude of mind. To him God is a personal guide and savior of men, who yearns after their redemption from sin and evil, and who watches confidingly over all their deeds. Browning describes the faith of one of the great masters of literature, and the description applies to himself: —

Crowned by prose and verse; and, wielding with wit's bauble,
learning's rod. . . .
Well? Why, he at least believed in Soul, was very sure of God!

Starting with God as the centre and life of all things, Browning next gives emphasis to the Ego, or the personality of man. In his conception of man he has also taken direction of Hegel, and he regards him as the one being in whom growth is the chief characteristic: —

> Progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
> Not God's and not the beast's; God is, they are,
> Man partly is, and wholly hopes to be.

Man is a personality, capable of taking the past into himself, and of making all its results living realities in his own nature. He is in a state of becoming, still in the process of development. Man completes the material process of evolution, and, through his spiritual nature, reaches forward and begins another, of a higher and more perfect order.

If Browning were a thinker only, his work should be pronounced a failure, for his philosophy could have been better presented in simple prose. Taking it as the skeleton of his poetic creations it has given a force and meaning, a breadth and beauty, to his work it could not have had other-

wise. What is most characteristic and original, and most identified with his genius, could not have been given to us in the true Browning manner without the metaphysics. Their use has led him long journeys, carried him into subtle labyrinths of inquiry, it is true; and that is always to be regretted, for it makes the reading of his poems a process far too difficult. Yet, in the whole body of his work, taken as the product of one mind, there is an amount of poetic beauty and thought combined not to be found in the work of any other recent poet. After all is said by way of praise of the metaphysics on the part of a few, and by way of criticism on the part of those who do not like the philosophy, Browning is, in the habit and trend of his mind, a poet. It is through emotion and imagination he reads the world, not through logic and the understanding. Balanced as his mind is, the direction of it is poetward, and towards an artistic apprehension of the world.

VII.

Browning has been described as a poet of doubt. Like all other half-statements, this one is based on a misconception of his true attitude towards religion. He doubts in regard to certain traditional and historic phases of Christianity, because he believes in regard to what is of fundamental importance in the religion of the soul. Browning is familiar with modern doubts and skepticism, knows their arguments and their force, and he has wrestled with them himself; but he is not overcome by them.

In some of his poems Browning would seem to be without reverence, to be a bold and daring speculator, as well as wanting in trust and faith. He asks the most perplexing questions; he scorns all conventional answers; he deals with the most solemn problems of life as if they were every-day matters of little moment, and even in what seems to be a mocking vein; and he has little respect for many of the externals of religion, which are of so much moment to many. In regard, how-

ever, to that which he conceives to be essential, his position is not one of doubt, but of the intensest and most confident faith. His faith is so deep and assured that he does not fear to face, and to deal plainly with, what other persons shrink from, and to demand other answers of his faith than those which are conventional.

Browning doubts concerning the externals of religion only, and in the name of that inward evidence which alone brings assured conviction. His faith rests on God's revelation of himself to the world; his doubts grow out of his disinclination to accept a traditional report of man's communion with God. He has put into the mouth of the Pope in the "Ring and the Book" an explicit statement of his own conception of the nature and value of true faith, of that faith which grows out of a direct intuition of God: —

> As we broke that old faith of the world
> Have we, next age, to break up this new —
> Faith, in the thing, grown faith in the report —
> Whence need to bravely disbelieve report
> Through increased faith in thing reports belie?
> Must we deny. . . .
> Recognized truths, obedient to some truth
> Unrecognized yet but perceptible? —
> Correct the portrait by the living face,
> Man's God, by God's God in the mind of man?

No more definite description of Browning's attitude towards the religion of his time could be given than is contained in these words. They indicate that he is a transcendentalist, and that he finds the authenticity and proof of religious truth in the soul's intuitions. He would have faith in the thing; that is, faith that God speaks directly to the soul of whatever man will listen to that still, small voice of the Infinite Truth within; and not faith in the mere report that men once had such a revelation. We must needs disbelieve the report for the sake of that truth which is about to break forth from the word of God. We may even reject the historic evidences of Christianity, because of that higher evidence which comes of a living contact with God through the intuitions of the soul.

Like all other idealists, Browning ignores the external and historic, and lays all stress on the inward and intuitive. He doubts at those points where science and history touch the problems of religion; he believes where faith is made stronger through intuition and philosophy. In "Paracelsus" he speaks of "just so much doubt" as would enable him to "plant a surer foot upon the sun-road." In "Easter-Day" he declares that

> You must mix some uncertainty
> With faith, if you would have faith be.

Not by any demonstration, that puts doubt entirely away, is true faith to be gained, but by the glow of nature without inviting man on, and by the aspiration within that gives him sight of an infinitely wider and more beautiful world. Intuition does not give absolute proof, so that certainty is made sure; but it attracts by glimpses and foregleamings, and by the vision of a world transcendently above and beyond the present. The only proof of that higher world is to be found in the soul's craving for it, and in its correspondence with that which intuition demands. This is the position of Browning, as it is the position of all men who have touched the deepest and most sacred things of the soul with the fresh insight of genius. It is not in the nature of those things which are most loftily spiritual to be "demonstrated" by the methods of history or of science. They offer their own methods and their own evidences. Their demonstration is that of life and that of the soul's experiences. We must climb these mountains for ourselves, with the help of a guide, to be sure, but not by the aid of railway or telegraph.

It may be said of Browning that he is essentially a Christian poet. To some this may seem a condemnation; but why should it be so? He is not a theologian or a versifier of theology. He is not a dogmatist or a sectarian. The grand conception of the world which Christianity presents, its lofty hopes and its pure ideals, have become inwoven with the texture of his mind. Its spirit has permeated his soul. Its history and its traditions, its life and mission of the Christ, its profound conception of humanity as related to the unseen world, its struggle of man for spiritual attainment, have seemed to him worthy of the sincerest and the noblest poetic treatment. They are to him neither myth nor dogma, but poetic interpretations of spiritual facts.

Browning has the deep inner spirit of Christianity. To him it is a life and a growth, and an outreaching of the finite after the Infinite. It is not a creed, or a fixed form of thought, or a goal to seek for selfish ends; but it is all that uplifts to make attainment sure, under the spiritual leadership of Christ. The Christ is not a mere captain of salvation; but a realized explanation of all that God is to men in his infinite love and tenderness. What is hard, formal, and extrinsic in

Christianity comes not to Browning, for he has no affinity with it in mind or heart. What is large, suggestive, spiritual, and interior in it he embraces with eager conviction. To him it is not something written in a book, but the law of that ever-living process of incarnation by which God reveals himself in the life of humanity. It is the calm, sweet voice of the Eternal One speaking to men of life and of life's worth.

His acceptance of the interior and spiritual significance of Christianity is seen in all those poems wherein he has dealt with the Christian legends. He is concerned for them only as they are the means of unfolding spiritual truths. In "Saul" he has finely interpreted his conception of Christ as an expression of the human love and sympathy of God. God feels for man with a man's tenderness and yearning. It is this human-heartedness of God which appears in the Christ. This it is which gives to the Christ-conception its profound value and its shaping power to guide the world's aspirations. David sings of the beauty of nature, the joy of human existence, and the glory of a life now lived for the coming ages of mankind; but none of these hopes satisfy Saul. Only when he sings of the redeeming love of God, and

of that infinite blessedness which Christ reveals, is the king made to have faith. The whole passage in which David sets forth the Christly nature of God's relations to man is one of great beauty, and it may well be quoted entire: —

Then the truth came upon me. No harp more — no song more! out broke —

"I have gone the whole round of Creation: I saw and I spoke!
I, a work of God's hand for that purpose, received in my brain
And pronounced on the rest of his handwork — returned him again
His creation's approval or censure: I spoke as I saw.
I report, as a man may of God's work — all's love, yet all's law!
Now I lay down the judgeship he lent me. Each faculty tasked
To perceive him, has gained an abyss, where a dew-drop was asked.
Have I knowledge? confounded it shrivels at wisdom laid bare.
Have I forethought? how purblind, how blank, to the Infinite care!
Do I task any faculty highest, to image success?
I but open my eyes, and perfection, no more and no less,
In the kind I imagined, full-fronts me, and God is seen God
In the star, in the stone, in the flesh, in the soul and the clod.
And thus looking within and around me, I ever renew
(With that stoop of the soul which in bending upraises it too)
The submission of Man's nothing-perfect to God's All-Complete,
As by each new obeisance in spirit, I climb to his feet!
Yet with all this abounding experience, this Deity known,
I shall dare to discover some province, some gift of my own.
There's one faculty pleasant to exercise, hard to hood-wink,
I am fain to keep still in abeyance (I laugh as I think)

Lest, insisting to claim and parade it, wot ye, I worst
E'en the Giver in one gift — Behold! I could love if I durst!
But I sink the pretension as fearing a man may o'ertake
God's own speed in the one way of love: I abstain, for love's sake!
— What, my soul? see thus far and no farther? when doors great and small,
Nine-and-ninety flew ope at our touch, should the hundredth appall?
In the least things, have faith, yet distrust in the greatest of all?
Do I find love so full in my nature, God's ultimate gift,
That I doubt his own love can compete with it? here, the parts shift?
Here, the creature surpass the Creator, the end, what Began? —
Would I fain in my impotent yearning do all for this man,
And dare doubt He alone shall not help him, who yet alone can?
Would it ever have entered my mind, the bare will, much less power,
To bestow on this Saul what I sang of, the marvellous dower
Of the life he was gifted and filled with? to make such a soul,
Such a body, and then such an earth for insphering the whole?
And doth it not enter my mind (as my warm tears attest)
These good things being given, to go on, and give one more, the best?
Ay, to save and redeem and restore him, maintain at the height
This perfection, — succeed with life's dayspring, death's minute of night?
Interpose at the difficult minute, snatch Saul, the mistake,
Saul, the failure, the ruin he seems now, — and bid him awake
From the dream, the probation, the prelude, to find himself set
Clear and safe in new light and new life, — a new harmony yet
To be run, and continued, and ended — who knows — or endure!
The man taught enough by life's dream, of the rest to make sure.
By the pain-throb, triumphantly winning intensified bliss,
And the next world's reward and repose, by the struggle in this.

"I believe it! 'tis Thou, God, that givest, 'tis I who receive:
In the first is the last, in thy will is my power to believe.
All's one gift: thou canst grant it moreover, as prompt to my prayer
As I breathe out this breath, as I open these arms to the air.
From thy will stream the worlds, life and nature, thy dread Sabaoth:
I will? — the mere atoms despise me! and why am I loth
To look that, even that in the face too? why is it I dare
Think but lightly of such impuissance? what stops my despair?
This; — 'tis not what man Does which exalts him, but what man Would do!
See the king — I would help him but cannot, the wishes fall through.
Could I wrestle to raise him from sorrow, grow poor to enrich,
To fill up his life, starve my own out, I would — knowing which,
I know that my service is perfect. — Oh, speak through me now!
Would I suffer for him that I love? So wilt Thou — so wilt Thou!
So shall crown thee the topmost. ineffablest, uttermost Crown —
And thy love fill infinitude wholly, nor leave up nor down
One spot for the creature to stand in! It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that Salvation joins issue with death!
As thy Love is discovered almighty, almighty be proved
Thy power, that exists with and for it, of Being beloved!
He who did most, shall bear most; the strongest shall stand the most weak.
'Tis the weakness in strength that I cry for! my flesh that I seek
In the Godhead! I seek and I find it. O Saul, it shall be
A Face like my face that receives thee: a Man like to me,
Thou shalt love and be loved by, forever! a Hand like this hand
Shall throw open the gates of new life to thee! See the Christ stand!"

The breadth of Browning's thought, and the sincerity of his spiritual convictions, are also to be seen in "Christmas-Eve," in which he speaks more fully in his own person than in any other of his longer poems. There he passes all the ways of interpreting Christ before him, to condemn and yet to approve them all. What he condemns and what he approves help us to see his own searching thought seeking after what is essential, and ready to reject all else. He clings not to the form; it is the inner and heaven-born truth he desires to attain unto. That found, and seen clearly with the eyes of the soul, and he is ready to let all forms and names and party cries slip away into the nothingness whence they came. Browning's religion is of the heart rather than of the intellect. This fact it is which interprets his conception of the Christ, who reveals in the loftiest human form the heart of God to the world. There is in Christ a process of growth, and not an aim that has been reached. He is an ideal, and not a dogma; he is a motive to life rather than an object of faith. His spirit may be found under all forms of faith; but it is Christ as a grand personal interpreter of the true spiritual life we are to follow, and not his teachings in the

abstract. The truths he proclaimed find their force and beauty in the fact that he uttered them. It is the life which is worth more than the teaching; for it was the life which was the true light of men. There is more in a great personality than in any truth the world has ever known.

Browning is a believer in revelation through the endowed personality of man. There is no evidence in his poetry that he believes in any other revelation or in any other avenue for the reception of moral and spiritual truth. The man of intuition, insight, and genius is the medium of God's communication of himself to the world. All knowledge is consummated in the being of God, and communicated in the outgoing of his personality. It is never absolute for man; it flashes on him with its transcendent glory; it attracts him, allures him, draws him on; but it is never reached in its fulness. Yet the truth is given to man in such measure that it guides and comforts him. Browning rightly denies to it the character of absoluteness, for the medium of its reception is always of a kind to blur it and mar its beauty. The true revelation is to the heart rather than to the head, to the emotions rather than to the intellect, and it takes the form not

of dogma but of life. It is "an exalted magnetic personality" through which God makes all his revelations of whatever kind to men, in the belief of Browning. Such persons are magnetic to God, the thrill of his life infuses their being, and he opens to them new avenues of spiritual aspiration and attainment. Such men constitute the highest force in the world; they are the true leaders of men, the God-given helpers of mankind. Of all these men of intuition the poet is the most exalted, the most essential to the higher life of humanity, for he is the one who inspires the race and gives it God's law of life.

A poet must be earth's essential king,

is the declaration of Sordello. Through the poet, or the man of intuition, for these are one and the same, the life of man is constantly renewed by fresh access to God. Revelation is progressive, a vision that gives new capacity, an instinct that brings new access of power. Nothing short of the Infinite is to give man final rest; all is movement, a tabernacle-life. The Infinite opens upon him with its assurance, forces itself upon his attention; but he can grasp its meaning and its reality only by the slow process of compliance

with its law and its spirit. When one step has been taken, another follows; one height scaled, another presents itself. Advance widens the vision, enlarges the ideal, and increases the capacity for loftier intuitions.

Perhaps Browning's attitude towards the problems of religion is best seen in his ideas on the subject of human nature and conversion. He does not believe in anything like absolute depravity; but he does believe that the normal or intuitive use of the human faculties is the true means of growth. In many of his minor poems, especially those having love for their subject, he teaches that man attains genuine happiness and his true destiny by obedience to the emotions and instincts that come to him spontaneously. The great sin of life is that of calculation and prudence. We are to obey the deeper impulses of the heart and the soul's intuitions, if we would live the true moral life. In "Christina" he has presented this idea in a most expressive manner, as the one grand thought which should guide us all.

> Oh, we're sunk enough here, God knows!
> But not quite so sunk that moments,
> Sure tho' seldom, are denied us,
> When the spirit's true endowments

Stand out plainly from its false ones,
And apprise it if pursuing
Or the right way or the wrong way,
To its triumph or undoing.

There are flashes struck from midnights,
There are fire-flames noondays kindle,
Whereby piled-up honors perish,
Whereby swoln ambitions dwindle,
While just this or that poor impulse,
Which for once had play unstifled,
Seems the sole work of a lifetime
That away the rest have trifled.

It is these inward revelations of the soul, these intuitions that come not by forethought or intellectual processes, which combine with life's experiences to convert us from the earthly life to a true apprehension of the spiritual realities which are above and beyond. God works through the normal capacities of human nature to teach us the higher way and law of life. If man is to attain the true purpose of his being it must be done, according to Browning, by

— indulging every instinct of the soul.

Every natural faculty is to be developed by a faithful acceptance of its commands.

It is not to be supposed that Browning purposes to teach that mere impulse and passion are to be followed as the ruling forces in life. That

would be quite against all the tendencies of his thought, and opposed to the whole spirit of his poetry. Moral truth does not come to us through a selfish inquiry into what will be the result; but by insight, acceptance, and obedience. There are moments which come to us all, when our minds attain a height above the mere cares and concerns of daily life, when thought dawns within in splendor, when the conscience is faithful as the magnetic needle, and when the will feels unconquerable power of obedience to the ideal; and it is these moments of highest inspiration by which we should guide our lives. When we order our lives by the spirit of these rare moments we are in the truest sense in the way of attainment. Love comes to us, also, to teach us renunciation, unselfishness, and fidelity. It takes us out of ourselves, inspires us with a nobler and a more sympathetic spirit, and exalts the whole nature by the purer impulse it creates. If love, however, descends to questions of prudence and worldly wisdom, it is debased and exiled from its own highest good. The impulse of love is generous, holy, and self-forgetting. It kindles new ardors of nobleness and sympathy; it makes duty a common privilege of daily exercise, and it opens

the gates of the ideal to let the light flood through. The lover becomes the poet, and his thoughts are "of imagination all compact." The lover is therefore the truest of men, the most worthy in spirit; and he it is who walks farthest out on the "sun-road" that leads to the land of spiritual accomplishment.

It is these moments of pure insight through which man's conversion is accomplished. The Eternal Spirit flashes in upon his soul a vision of what his life ought to become, and for one moment gives to him a knowledge of moral truth. If he joyfully receives and obeys, he comes to know the way of true attainment. This vision is but a momentary glimpse, because man needs to be made aware of the spiritual realms within and above, and because the path of perfect attainment is to be found only through the hard experiences of life. Some light off shore may flash forth its momentary splendor for us from time to time, but we must find our way through the darkness and the weary waste of waters by our own effort. The true mariner sails God's seas of the spirit with courage and confidence, though the tempest mingles with the calm in his experience. The old Pope, in the "Ring and

Book," is made to utter Browning's convictions about the educative process of life: —

> Why comes temptation but for man to meet
> And master and make crouch beneath his foot,
> And so be pedestalled in triumph? . . .
> Learning anew the use of soldiership,
> Self-abnegation, freedom from all fear,
> Loyalty to the life's end! . . .
> All till the very end is trial in life.
> . . . . . .
> Mind is not matter nor from matter, but
> Above, — leave matter then, proceed with mind:
> . . . . . .
> This life is training and a passage; pass, —
> Still, we march over some flat obstacle
> We made give way before us; solid truth
> In front of it, were motion for the world?
> The moral sense gains but by exercise.
> 'Tis even as man grew probatively
> Initiated in Godship, set to make
> A fairer moral world than this he finds,
> Guess now what shall be known hereafter. . . .
> Life is probation and this earth no goal
> But starting point of man.

The object of this life of discipline, says St. John, in "A Death in a Desert," is to permit us to gain the attainment and satisfaction which come of love.

> For life, with all it yields of joy and woe,
> And hope and fear,
> Is just our chance o' the prize of learning love,
> How love might be, hath been indeed, and is.

The need and the process of probation are more fully made real to us in the same poem.

> Man is not God but hath God's end to serve,
> A master to obey, a course to take,
> Somewhat to cast off, somewhat to become?
> Grant this, then man must pass from old to new,
> From vain to real, from mistake to fact,
> From what once seemed good, to what now proves best.
> How could man have progression otherwise?
> . . . He falls
> Into man's place, a thing nor God nor beast,
> Made to know that he can know and not more:
> Lower than God who knows all and can all,
> Higher than beasts which know and can so far
> As each beast's limit, perfect to an end,
> Nor conscious that they know, nor craving more;
> While man knows partly but conceives beside,
> Creeps ever on from fancies to the fact,
> And in this striving, this converting air
> Into a solid he may grasp and use,
> Finds progress, man's distinctive mark alone,
> Not God's, and not the beast's: God is, they are,
> Man partly is and wholly hopes to be.
> Such progress could no more attend his soul
> Were all its struggles after found at first
> And guesses changed to knowledge absolute,
> Than motion wait his body, were all else
> Than it the solid earth on every side,
> Where now through space he moves from rest to rest.
> Man, therefore, thus conditioned, must expect
> He could not, what he knows now, know at first;
> When he considers that he knows to-day,
> Come but to-morrow, he will find misknown,

Getting increase of knowledge, since he learns
Because he lives, which is to be a man,
Set to instruct himself by his past self:
First, like the brute, obliged by facts to learn,
Next, as man may, obliged by his own mind,
Bent, habit, nature, knowledge turned to law.
God's gift was that man should conceive of truth
And yearn to gain it, catching at mistake,
As midway help till he reach fact indeed.
. . . . .
Will ye renounce this pact of creatureship?
The pattern on the Mount subsists no more,
Seemed awhile, then turned to nothingness;
But copies, Moses strove to make thereby,
Serve still and are replaced as time requires:
By these, make newest vessels, reach the type!
If ye demur, this judgment on your head,
Never to reach the ultimate, angel's law,
Indulging every impulse of the soul
There where law, life, joy, impulse are one thing.

But why should man be given this process of probation? Why should he not have been made pure and perfect, instead of being wrought forth by so hard a process? In "Rabbi Ben Ezra," Browning has given his answer: —

Poor vaunt of life indeed,
Were man but formed to feed
On joy, to solely seek and find and feast:
Such feasting ended, then
As sure an end to men;
Irks care the crop-full bird? Frets doubt the maw-crammed beast?

Rejoice we are allied
To that which doth provide
And not partake, effect and not receive!
A spark disturbs our clod;
Nearer we hold of God
Who gives, than of His tribes that take, I must believe.

Then, welcome each rebuff
That turns earth's smoothness rough,
Each sting that bids nor sit nor stand, but go!
Be our joys three parts pain!
Strive, and hold cheap the strain;
Learn, nor account the pang; dare, never grudge the throe!

Then he compares man, as being developed by God's spiritual process, to a cup in the hands of a potter. It is enough that the potter and the clay endure, and that the latter is being shaped to serve the purpose of the former.

Fool! All that is, at all,
Lasts ever, past recall;
Earth changes, but thy soul and God stand sure:
What entered into thee,
That was, is, and shall be:
Time's wheel runs back or stops; Potter and clay endure.

He fixed thee mid this dance
Of plastic circumstance,
This Present, thou, forsooth, wouldst fain arrest:
Machinery just meant
To give thy soul its bent,
Try thee and turn thee forth, sufficiently impressed.

What though the earlier grooves
Which ran the laughing loves
Around thy base, no longer pause and press?
What though, about thy rim,
Scull-things in order grim
Grow out, in graver mood, obey the sterner stress?

Look not thou down, but up!
To uses of a cup,
The festal board, lamp's flash, and trumpet's peal,
The new wine's foaming flow,
The Master's lips aglow!
Thou, heaven's consummate cup, what needst thou with earth's wheel?

But I need, now as then,
Thee, God, who mouldest men;
And since, not even while the world was worst,
Did I, — to the wheel of life
With shapes and colors rife,
Bound dizzily, — mistake my end, to slake Thy thirst:

So, take and use Thy work!
Amend what flaws may lurk,
What strain o' the stuff, what warpings past the aim!
My times be in Thy hand!
Perfect the cup as planned!
Let age approve of youth, and death complete the same.

It is an Infinite Purpose which is shaping man's destiny. He is in the hands of a Master Artist, who will perfect him in beauty after his own

mind. Yet all such images are too crude for expressing the relations of the free spirit of man to the Infinite Life towards which he presses, that he may come more and more into sympathy with it. The world is given to man as an instrument of growth. He is free to use or to reject. He can climb the heights or he can descend to the abyss. The choice is his, and the destiny of his own making. If man loves the material good of the world, he is permitted to glut himself with it to the full. Should that not satisfy him, the spiritual opens before him with its ever-enlarging joy and beauty. In his "Easter-Day" Browning has thoroughly developed this idea, and made answer to the question why it should be so hard for man to lead the Christ-like life. In "Ferishtah's Fancies" he returns to the same problem, and gives a new setting to every phase of his theory of man's being and destiny. Especially, in the latter poem, does he emphasize his belief that body and soul must be trained together. He is no ascetic, no scorner of the material conditions of life. Man is to gain the true end of his being by the use of the present to the full, not in selfishness and wantonness, but in a manly delight in every power and faculty he possesses.

No, be man and nothing more —
Man who, as man conceiving, hopes and fears,
And craves and deprecates, and loves and loathes,
And bids God help him, till death touch his eyes
And show God granted most denying all.

In "Rabbi Ben Ezra" he has expressly stated his conviction that, in the service of the present life, the body is to be regarded as of equal importance with the soul.

Let us not always say,
'Spite of this flesh to-day,
I strove, made head, gained ground upon the whole!'
As the bird wings and sings,
Let us cry, 'All good things
Are ours, nor soul helps flesh more now, than flesh helps soul!'

Browning continually exults in the power and faculty which are man's, and in the eternal promise which lies enfolded in his nature. He does not accept the limitations of man's being merely with a philosophical calm and a religious trust, for his attitude is that of confident anticipation. In them is to be found the more glorious promise for his destiny. He rejoices with all men who struggle and attain; for them life has the deepest joy. In the struggle is the victory; and how glorious it is to fight the way on, to meet obstacles and overcome them! Even more divine is it

to be overcome in the conflict. The highest victory comes only through defeat. Peace is won from out the cannon's mouth, and life from the jaws of death. The Christ lost all, that he might gain all. When the earth of material success had passed utterly away for him, then the heaven of true spiritual attainment became his forever.

Man lives on earth because the earth-life is necessary to his development. There will come after it a more perfect result in proportion as we have warred with the hard conditions and overcome them. It is not smooth things man needs; but those which through trial will fit him for the higher destiny. Man advances through obstacles overcome:

> — for mankind springs
> Salvation by each hindrance interposed.

We are to meet the hindrances face to face, as the soldier meets the enemy. So meeting them we are sure of victory.

> If I stoop
> Into a dark tremendous sea of cloud,
> It is but for a time; I press God's lamp
> Close to my heart; its splendor soon or late
> Will pierce the gloom.

This high conviction and assurance concerning the evil in human life grow out of his feeling

that there is an immortal life of ever-ascending attainment awaiting man in the future. That thought pervades all Browning's poetry; and we can read but few pages of his without finding it repeated in some new form. Over all is God; and here is man struggling through the help of his imperfection to attain harmony with him, and sure to reach it. It is that grand hope and that profound faith which cause him to take a tone joyous and triumphant ever. He is no dogmatist, no blind assertor of opinions: for he is calm, and modest, and deferential; but he goes forward as one who knows that life is for victory. The captain has given orders; he stops not to question why they have been given. His it is to obey; and he does it without hesitation. In this spirit he accepts the great problems of life as having true and sure solutions in the heart that aspires. The heart has found God; and that is enough. The heart has also found the door of the future open; and now we stand in the outer court a little time to make ready our thoughts to enter in.

Only grant a second life, I acquiesce
In this present life as failure, count misfortune's worst assault
Triumph, not defeat, assured that loss so much the more exalts
Gain about to be. For at what moment did I so advance
Near to knowledge as when frustrate of escape from ignorance?

Did not beauty prove most precious when its opposite obtained
Rule, and truth seem more than ever potent because falsehood reigned?
While for love — Oh how but, losing love, does whoso love succeed
By the death-pang to the birth-throe — learning what is love indeed?
Only grant my soul may carry high through death her cup unspilled,
Brimming though it be with knowledge, life's loss drop by drop distilled,
I shall boast it mine — the balsam, bless each kindly wrench that wrung
From life's tree its inmost virtue, tapped the root whence pleasure sprung,
Barked the bole, and broke the bough, and bruised the berry, left all grace
Ashes in death's stern alembic, loosed elixir in its place!

Browning's faith may be stated in the words, God, soul, earth, heaven, hell, and evil overcome — as he has done it in "La Saisiaz." In more philosophical phrase, he teaches the absolute personality of God as the first principle, man as a finite image of God attaining harmony with him by a life of probation, the crowning of that probation by the triumph of immortal aspiration, love the means of man's growth, uncertainty also a necessary step of true attainment, good and evil the opposites by which man is helped to choose what is for his true growth, knowledge given

through intuition, the spiritual mingled here with the earthly and to be used with it, and God manifested through the human form of Christ. As thus reduced to the baldest statement, it would seem that Browning's faith embraced little more than the old interpretation of Christianity; but it contains much beside. He has stated the Christian faith in a manner of his own, which many will at once reject as not bearing the true mark. As the effort of a strong mind, a mind guided by philosophy and poetry alike, as well as by reason and love, his conclusions are of the greatest interest and importance. They bear to us the personal testimony of a keen mind dealing with the highest themes. It is a fresh and a vigorous word Browning gives us; the word of a poet, and of one who looks at life with the artist's eye. It is through the heart and the imagination that he has sought to solve the problems of faith. And yet his pages contain very little of undiluted emotion or of imagination unchecked by plain fact. A theist and a Christian, a mystic and a rationalist, a man of faith and a skeptic insistent on truth — Browning is all these. His faith is thoroughly subjective, and yet he has a passionate sympathy with the historic side of Christianity.

In him we find à Kempis, Rousseau, and Kant reconciled, and reappearing in the thought of one man.

God manifested in humanity is the cardinal thought of Browning's specially religious teachings; and with that is linked the imperfection of man. These central beliefs, however, obtain at his hands a new and unique interpretation, which leaves for them in the end but a partial resemblance to the old doctrines. Man is imperfect, and yet the imperfection is the very means of his development, which is to be worked out by an absolute obedience to the natural impulses of his own being. His own nature, however, is a centre of God's activity. God works by man and with him to perfect the finite with the life of the Infinite.

Those who seek in the poet the artist only, will be discouraged by Browning, again and again. They will find little joy in his "La Saisiaz," "Ferishtah's Fancies," "A Death in the Desert," and many another of his poems. If an artist in these poems, he is an artist making use of the highest spiritual problems for their solution. He does not use them as a *motif* or a foil, but for the sake of throwing light on them. Looked at with

the eyes of the artist these are not great poems. They lack in the essentials of the truest poetic art. They have not enough of beauty; and they cannot be the sources of perpetual joy. Looked at, however, as the poet's solution of the problems which have ever plagued the minds of men, they must attract attention. The poet makes answer, not with faith or reason, tradition or historic evidence; but with the heart and imagination. Is that a testimony worthy of acceptance? The world has long neglected it; but it is one properly to be credited with the highest value. Without it, no right solution is to be reached. Divorced from imagination, reason is a false witness. Faith alienated from love is no true guide for man. But, in so far as Browning has trusted to the heart and imagination as the only trustworthy guides in religion, has he failed to convince us. The true solution can come only from a consensus of the testimony of all the faculties; and this is to be had in no wise except by a long and patient effort.

As a poet, Browning can afford us little pleasure in his more thoughtful poems. These are for the persons who seek guidance on the way of life, and guidance satisfactory for thought. To these

he comes with refreshment and a strong arm of support. His is a voice to lead, and a lamp to light the feet. He gives no promise of ease, or peace, or joy, to those who would seek counsel of him; but he gives courage, high aims, and a clear vision. His words are often like battle strokes; and they ring forth with power and with sympathy. He is no captain who commands, but a friend who counsels. "It is so to me," is his only word. Others may go whither they will; but he goes where the light has led him.

In all the years of the present century, no one has sent forth into the world words on the questions of religion more needful, or more likely to help, than those of Robert Browning. That a few only will seek them out, cannot decrease their value or give them less power to affect the genuine course of human thought. They have the force of inspirations, making the ideal more real, and giving the heart a stronger hold on certainties. They fix the desires and purposes of life on the central things; and they help to gain the faith which is higher than sight.

Browning is, and will always remain, the poet of the few. He has expressed in his poetry little of those qualities which win popularity. His thought does not take form along the common levels of opinion. The emotional life is not interpreted by him in a manner to bring him into sympathy with the great majority of mankind, even in cultivated circles. He makes too great a demand on thought, and he is too unconventional, to be received with favor by the mass of readers. Few will take the trouble to acquire the language which he has developed for expressing his poetical thoughts. It has been said that he wrote Greek in shorthand; and that will be the feeling of many who read him for the first time. The criticism is justly made; and the result is that a love of Browning must be acquired. He needs the commentary which has been provided for his works by one of his disciples. Even that is not a perfect key for unlocking the treasures which are contained in his volumes. No commentary has yet made "Sordello" other than a stumbling-block for even the most zealous of the poet's admirers. Other poems are not less blind and perplexing, and needing to be made capable of mental absorption by some process of dilution.

Those who once come into sympathy with Browning, become his enthusiastic admirers and disciples. The reading of his poetry becomes a cultus, and admiration for it the sign of a spiritual brotherhood. He is studied with enthusiàsm, and his teachings are accepted with the ardors of conviction. Something there must be in a poet who can command such zeal and devotion. What is the secret of his peculiar power, and what the nature of that unique fascination which he exercises? They must be very great to overcome the real difficulties presented in his poetry.

Something of the charm Browning has for his special admirers is to be found in the very fact that he is a perplexity to the majority of mankind. They love him because he is exclusive and unique. He does not belong to everybody; and those who admire him form an aristocracy of their own. There are intellectual epicures, who are not willing to digest that which is given to every one. They wish for something that is a rarity, and which can only be had with much difficulty. Others there are who do not care for the exclusiveness of the poet, but who delight in contending with verbal and philosophical difficulties. The harder the nut, the greater the zeal with

which they undertake to crack it. They have an insatiable literary curiosity, and cannot take an interest in the poet who does not try the patience and rack the ingenuity of the reader.

It would be a grave injustice done to Browning to suppose that these two classes embrace all his admirers. What is most zealous and exclusive in their admiration has its origin in these causes. A more substantial basis for the love of his poetry is to be found in his spiritual interpretation of man and the world. In all ages there are transcendentalists; but in a time of positivism they are drawn together around the man of intuition and faith with a fresh zeal. Whoever asserts the worth of the soul with a supreme conviction, will not be wanting in disciples. As no other has done during the last quarter of a century, Browning has asserted the eternal reality of the soul as the most vital truth which can come within the ken of man. The emphasis he has laid on that truth has been in itself quite enough to win him all the disciples he has gained. The man of positive thought on any subject of supreme moment to the intellectual understanding of existence cannot fail to attract those who will find in him a leader and a master.

More than all else is Browning an interpreter of human nature. Here is the real secret of his power. He has a wonderful insight into human character, and a marvellous facility for its interpretation. He not only creates characters, but he unfolds and makes them manifest. Human nature has no secrets from him. His power of analysis is of the most subtle kind, and reaches to the inmost impulses of the human being. The measure of his analytic power is the measure of his sympathy, for his sympathy is the guiding motive in his analysis. Humanity is the highest attraction he knows; and his love for man is of the loftiest and widest kind. He knows because he loves. He loves because the object is worthy of his affection. Love and faith are the instruments of his analysis. There is warrant enough, therefore, for the admiration his work has received, and basis there is, too, for whatever study may be given to it. The very effort he has made to analyze the nature of man shows the greatness of his aim. Man is the highest theme of the poet's art, and its very greatness may obscure the result of his creative effort.

INDEX.

Arnold, Matthew, 25.
Art, 45, 49, 63, 150, 173, 176, 182, 226, 233, 239, 303, 310.
Arthur, King, 72, 121.

Beauty, 51, 98, 149.
Burns, 38.
Browning, Robert: his father, 279; early verses, 279; influence of Shelley, 280; first poem, 280; "Paracelsus," 281; "Bells and Pomegranates," 282; marriage, 282; personal traits, 284; Bayard Taylor's description of, 284; Hawthorne's, 284; Harriet Martineau's, 285; Landor's, 286; Domett's 287; personality of, 288; relations to his wife, 289; Elizabeth Barrett, 291; wedding, 293; in Italy, 295; influence of marriage, 299; tributes to wife, 298.
Browning as a thinker, 303; theory of art, 304; theory of nature, 307; theory of life, 308; music, 312; personality, 313; characteristics as a poet, 316; style, 318; Gothic spirit, 323; learning, 327; dramatic method, 329; dramas, 330; development of soul, 336; poet of psychology, 337; his own teachings, 343; poetic qualities, 345; love of man, 346; analytic spirit, 347; philosophic attitude, 349; the individual, 351; God, 352; attitude of doubt, 355; his faith, 356; an idealist, 357; a Christian, 359; Christ, 359; revelation, 365; human nature, 367; intuition, 368; insight, 369; promise of man's nature, 377; probation, 378; religious aspiration, 380; summary, 385.
Browning, 10, 13, 37, 181, 264, 273.
Browning, Mrs., 39, 133, 282, 290.

Byron, 47.

Cambridge, 73.
Carlyle, 79, 82, 85, 89, 205, 262, 273, 308.
Chaucer, 62, 72.
Christianity, 176, 264, 311, 359.
Coleridge, 25, 36, 62.
Conventionalism, 228.
Critic, the, 11, 210, 221, 305.
Criticism, 15, 208, 215, 225.

Dante, 153, 324.
Dryden, 58, 99.

Elizabeth, age of, 57.

Faith, 164, 260, 382.
Feeling, 20, 130, 199, 243.
Fox, Caroline, 80, 84.
Freedom, 58.
Freshwater, 82.

God, 157, 203, 240, 259, 303, 351.
Goethe, 64, 203.
Gothic spirit, 179, 218, 323.
Greek thought, 61, 89, 174, 203.

Hallam, Arthur, 78, 113.
Hegel, 349.
Howitt, Wm., 79.

Idealism, 57, 155, 174, 271, 349.
"Idyls of the King," 105, 121, 139.
Imagination, 25, 37, 43, 66, 197, 201.
Imitation in poetry, 43.
Immortality, 116, 158, 379.
"In Memoriam," 78, 112.

Keats, 47, 61, 89, 180, 280.

Landor, 61, 80.
Longfellow, 88.
Louth, 73.

Man, 68, 173, 231, 353, 367, 378.
"Maud," 92, 106.
Maurice, 74, 203.
Melody in verse, 89, 91.
"Modern Painters," 191, 198.
Morals, 46, 144, 233.
Morris, Wm., 181.

Naturalism, 175.
Nature, 69, 180, 187, 202, 307.
Newman, Cardinal, 74.

Oxford movement, 60, 102, 176, 216.

Past, the, 61.
Plagiarism, 95.
Poet, the, 20, 33, 37, 45, 50, 53, 65, 68, 131, 145, 322, 366.
Poetry, 12, 19, 23, 25, 30, 35, 37, 39, 44.
Political economy, 243.
Pope, 39, 58.
Pre-Raphaelites, 177, 216.
"Princess, the," 110.
Progress, 61, 103, 123, 154.

Realism, 64, 155, 206, 230, 238.
Revolution, 66, 217.
Revolution, French, 57, 174.
Rhyme, 37.
Rousseau, 202, 229.
Ruskin, John: influence of father, 185; love of nature, 185; childhood, 186; early love of art, 187; influence of mother, 188; poetry, 189; at Oxford, 190; "Modern Painters," 191; as an author, 192; personal traits, 192; described by Crabbe Robinson, 193; Miss Mitford, 193; Sydney Dobell, 193; habits, 194.
Ruskin: art influence, 183; as a prose writer, 196; eloquence, 197; imagination, 197; poetry, 198; interpreter of life, 199; genius, 200; love of nature, 201; like Rousseau, 202; Greek spirit, 203; studies of nature, 204; nature as God's habitation, 205; like Wordsworth, 207; as a critic, 208; theory of life, 209; breadth of thought, 212; science, 216; sympathy with Oxford movement, 217; criticism not sound, 219; defects in teaching, 223; art critic, 226; nature of art, 227; conventionalism in art, 228; truthfulness, 230; love of man, 231; moral teaching, 233; realism, 237; higher worth of art, 240; sympathies with humanity, 243; political economy, 243; St. George's Guild, 247; "strong man," 249; paternalism in government, 250; religious teachings, 257; a Christian, 259; critic of religion, 261; faith in God, 264; summary, 266.
Ruskin, 10, 13, 36, 183, 185, 305.

Satire, 109.
Science in relation to poetry, 22, 26, 28, 36, 64, 69, 216.
Scott, 57, 59.
Sentiment, 118, 130, 243, 248.
Shakspere, 49, 52, 334.
Shelley, 57, 203, 280, 289.
Spenser, 52.
Swinburne, 39, 181.

Tennyson, Alfred: ancestry, 71; father, 71; brothers, 72; early poetry, 72; school at Louth, 72; poet is influenced by, 72; first poems, 73; at Cambridge, 73; college friends, 74; Whewell, tutor, 74; second volume of poems, 75; Fanny Kemble's description, 76; Fitzgerald's, 76; "Poems" published, 77; leaves Cambridge, 77;

Arthur Hallam, 78; moves to London, 78; wanderings, 79; Howitt's description, 79; Landor's, 80; Caroline Fox's, 80; "Poems" in two volumes, 81; Poet Laureate, 82; at Freshwater, 82; personal habits, 83; Conway's description, 84; Caroline Fox again, 84; Carlyle's, 85; character, 86.

Tennyson: rank as a poet, 88; love of melody and music, 89; an artist in words, 90; habit of revision, 92; accuracy in details, 93; his knowledge, 93; wholly a poet, 94; plagiarisms, 95; letter quoted, 96; love of beauty, 98; dilettante in spirit, 100; liberalism, 102; love of man, 105; "Maud," 106; satire, 109; "The Princess," 110; "In Memoriam," 112; "Idyls of the King," 121; lyrical and idyllic poetry, 127; the poet of English life, 128; worth of sentiment, 130; sympathy with the past, 132; poems of love, 133; patriotic poetry, 134; chief characteristic, 136; dramatic poetry, 138; views of art, 144; moral aim in poetry, 145; nature of true art, 150; artistic traits, 150; an idealist, 153; progress, 154; faith in God, 156; belief in immortality, 159; religious ideas, 161; a broad churchman, 164; "we have but faith," 164; sympathy with his time, 169; summary, 169.

Tennyson, 10, 13, 39, 52, 70, 181, 263.

Tennyson, Charles, 73, 76.

Transcendentalism, 60, 349.

Turner, 175, 180, 191, 203, 220.

Victorian era, 62, 67, 70, 173.

Whitman, 39.

Wordsworth, 26, 29, 38, 47, 52, 57, 60, 63, 99, 103, 175, 180, 203, 241.

World-poets, 37, 46.

DATE DUE

#47-0108 Peel Off Pressure Sensitive

3 5134 00154167 7

PR 503 .C6
Cooke, George Willis, 1848-
Poets and problems

GENERAL LOAN COLLECTION

OREGON STATE LIBRARY
SALEM

RULES GOVERNING MAIL ORDER LOANS

Books loaned through local or traveling libraries are subject to the rules governing them.

No charge for books.—The books circulated by the State Library are free to all citizens of Oregon who will agree to observe the rules of the library and pay transportation charges both ways on books loaned. Shipment is made by mail or express and all prepaid charges must be remitted upon receipt or return of package. Acknowledgment of receipt is requested.

Borrowers.—Adults not previously registered as borrowers should apply through librarian of local public or traveling library, school officers or principal, county school superintendent, member of the Legislature, officers of the local grange or other permanent organization, or give reference to some state officer located in Salem. Minors must obtain signature of local librarian or school principal.

Number of Volumes.—Any reasonable request for books will be granted if applicant wishes them for study or research work, and books are not needed elsewhere. Loans of fiction will be limited to two volumes at one time.

Time Kept.—Books must be received at the State Library within 21 days from date of loan. They may be renewed for two weeks upon request as long as needed for study, unless reserved for other borrowers. Date upon which books will be due in the library is given on notice of shipment. Some books will be issued for shorter period and may not be renewed.

Groups of books for clubs and libraries are loaned for longer periods.

Fines.—A fine of two cents a day must be paid for books kept, without renewal, beyond period for which loan is made. No book will be loaned to anyone who has failed to meet the obligations of borrowers as given in these rules. Notice will be sent when books are five days overdue without having been renewed.

Lost and Injured Books.—Borrowers are held responsible for books and are required to pay for lost and injured volumes. Number of pieces loaned is given on notification postal and borrowers are held responsible for this number unless notice of shortage or error is sent immediately upon receipt of package.

Books must be kept clean, must not be marked and corners of leaves must not be turned down.

J.K. GILL CO.
THIRD & ALDER
PORTLAND
ORE.

S0-DRU-212